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# THE ART OF A CORPORATION

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY AS PATRON AND COLLECTOR,  
1600–1860

JENNIFER HOWES

“This is the first attempt to look at all the artworks produced by the East India Company, as a corporate entity. Through detective investigation, Howes brings the dispersed collection back together both as a narrative and as a collection, connecting also to current debates about empire, capitalism and memorials”.

**Giles Tillotson**

“The complexity of the East India Company is one of the reasons British Empire is so poorly understood. Howes does vital work shining light on one particular aspect of its history – a real education for me”.

**Sathnam Sanghera**





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## THE ART OF A CORPORATION

*The Art of a Corporation* is a comprehensive study of artworks that were commissioned and collected by the East India Company from the early seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. These items range from oil paintings on canvas and marble statuary, to sandstone Buddhas and metal figurines of Hindu deities. The book takes a chronological approach and focuses on provenance to show that objects are valuable primary resources for understanding the East India Company's history. The artworks illustrate how one of the longest-surviving multinational corporations in the Western world changed over its three-century history and provide a powerful visual account of its perpetually reinvented image.

This book is a must read for scholars and researchers of art history, colonial art, colonial studies, British history, economic history, business history, South Asian history, post-colonial studies, and cultural studies.

Chapter 1 of this book is freely available as a downloadable Open Access PDF at <http://www.taylorfrancis.com> under a Creative Commons. Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International license.

**Jennifer Howes** is a London-based art historian who specialises in the art and architecture of India's colonial period.





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Collector, 1600–1860

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## PREFACE

I first learned of the East India Company's corporately gathered artworks in 1995, when I worked for Jerry Losty and Pat Kattenhorn in what was then the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library. That summer, Pat was managing the conservation of sculptures in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and we couldn't resist joking about the old portrait statues. (Clive is difficult to work with! Does Admiral Pocock deserve to be released from his crate?) Pat explained why these sculptures and others, once displayed inside the East India Company's long-gone headquarters in the City of London, were now housed in Whitehall and were under the British Library's curatorial care.

When I finished my PhD in 1999, Jerry Losty and I jointly authored a postdoctoral proposal for British Academy funding, and with its success, I began researching the India Office's Mackenzie Drawings. I was then appointed a curator at the British Library, where I worked under Jerry's supervision until his retirement seven years later. Had it not been for his willingness to work with me, I would have never written this book.

Part of my job was to conduct audits and manage the conservation of the British Library's collections in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Occasionally, I was contacted about removing an East India Company artwork. This required me to reshuffle the oversized objects stored in the British Library's modern St Pancras building to make space for the rejected item. Whilst I understood the politics behind sending these objects "back" to the British Library, it always seemed a shame that they were being withdrawn from the building where they'd been since the nineteenth century. At the Foreign Office I met Peter McKeown and Kate Crowe, who knew considerably more about the history of the India Office than me and were keen to share their knowledge.

In 2010, Lucy Ellis from the Public Catalogue Foundation approached me about digitising all the British Library's oil paintings for the ArtUk website. Pitching all those paintings into a searchable national database was a great achievement. It also exposed the collections to an infinite world of on-line mash-ups, where the provenance of East India Company artworks could become further watered down. It seemed more important than ever to identify and research artworks with this unique provenance.

All these experiences, facilitated by the people mentioned above, planted the idea in my head to publish this book. When I decided to leave the British Library in December 2014, writing *The Art of a Corporation* was my top priority. My persistence was

## PREFACE

buoyed by the friendly and helpful staff of the British Library, particularly in the Asia and Africa Reading Room. I'm not sure they'll ever realise how much I appreciated their support when I switched from being a member of staff to a reader.

For eight years, my enthusiasm to complete this book has been sustained and encouraged by my loving husband, Matthew Price, to whom I dedicate this book.

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Finally, I'd like to thank all my friends and family, particularly my husband, Matthew Price.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
BM	British Museum
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
IOR	India Office Records
NPG	National Portrait Gallery, London
RA	Royal Academy
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, London



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# Introduction

One of the most recognised paintings owned by the East India Company was Benjamin West's enormous canvas of Shah Alam bestowing upon Robert Clive the grant of the diwani. [Figure 4.14] It shows an event that occurred at Allahabad on 16 August 1765,<sup>1</sup> which was later regarded as the pivotal moment when the Company assumed administrative control over India. Benjamin West, the artist of the painting, had never been to India, and unsurprisingly, the scene he painted bore no resemblance to the historical event it was meant to show. An eyewitness account of the moment at Allahabad in 1765, authored by an attendee named Ghulam Hussain Khan, described it as a short, perfunctory meeting inside a tent that was so devoid of formality that it was insulting to the Mughal emperor. By contrast, Benjamin West painted the meeting as a grand affair, with Shah Alam seated on a high throne, surrounded by his and Robert Clive's courtiers, inside a palatial building. The skyline through the window behind them even features a building that looks suspiciously like St Paul's Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> Half a century after this historical event, the East India Company perceived the Treaty of Allahabad as the grand moment shown in West's painting. This 50-year gap ensured that there were no living witnesses of the Treaty of Allahabad's signing. To understand this moment's revised importance in the early nineteenth century, as shown in Benjamin West's painting, one merely needs to look at how the painting was absorbed into the East India Company's collections, and consider where it was displayed inside East India House, the Company's headquarters in the City of London. The painting's acquisition occurred when a significant change to the Company's ideology had occurred, and this ideology related to the activities inside the room where the painting was displayed. The positioning of Benjamin West's painting inside East India House literally expressed the changes to the Company's self-image in the early nineteenth century.

In 1820, Edward Clive, the son of Robert Clive, gave the painting to the East India Company. It was installed inside a large, high-ceilinged rectangular room on the ground floor of East India House known at that time as the Committee of Correspondence Room. In this room, a select group of the Company's highest-ranking directors would regularly meet with a small, elite secretarial staff to draft letters that were sent to India. The topics of these letters were varied, but their core purpose was to issue instructions to Company servants in India pertaining to financial matters and staffing. The year before Edward Clive gave the West painting to the East India Company, a new Assistant Examiner was appointed to work in the Committee of Correspondence. That man was the historian James Mill, who wrote *The History of*

*British India*. Published in 1817, the Company viewed Mill's book as a seminal work and made it required reading for its trainee civil servants. In the book, Mill interpreted Robert Clive's actions in South Asia as those of a great hero of empire.<sup>3</sup> This was a huge departure from Clive's reputation only a few years earlier, when he was one of the most reviled individuals in Britain. At the time of his death in 1774, Robert Clive's reputation was so toxic that the East India Company refused to memorialise him in any way. Clive's pernicious reputation is mentioned in James Mill's 1817 book, but in a forgiving way, with Mill claiming that, when held in balance, Clive's actions were heroic rather than destructive. The placement of Benjamin West's painting of Robert Clive inside the Committee of Correspondence Room, the very same room where James Mill was employed as a high-ranking civil servant within the Company's London-based administration, was more than a mere coincidence. The fictional moment shown in the painting corresponded with the East India Company's newly promoted image of Robert Clive as a great man, as promoted by James Mill's *History*.

The fictional narrative in West's painting, and the circumstances behind the painting's acquisition in 1820, are an example of how the East India Company used art to manage its reputation, and how artworks conveyed changes to its establishment. The Company's official history, as expressed in the early nineteenth century by James Mill, was reinforced to the Company's staff in London by the painting. It is merely one example of how, throughout its history, artworks were used to convey the East India Company's official narratives, linking its chosen telling of events with its prevailing corporate image at that time. The paintings and sculptures considered in this book were part of the Company's corporately gathered collections. When the circumstances behind their acquisition are contextualised, they reveal new ways of understanding the East India Company's self-image and changing functions. The narratives connected with the artworks show how the Company chose to represent itself to a changing audience made up of shareholders, the Crown, Parliament, and, eventually, its employees and the public.

### The Company and its collections described

Most of the artworks the East India Company commissioned and collected in London were displayed inside East India House, its headquarters on Leadenhall Street, in the City of London. Those that weren't displayed inside East India House were mainly memorial sculptures inside places of worship. The memorials were often sculpted at the same time, and by the same artists, as marble statues that went inside East India House. They linked public spaces like Westminster Abbey with the East India Company's central place of business. Most of the paintings and sculptures considered in this book were by British artists, but large numbers of South Asian sculptures were also displayed inside East India House in the nineteenth century. Just like the sculptures by Western artists, the Indian sculptures connected with profound shifts to the Company's image.

Before East India House's demolition in 1861, the Company's collections were dispersed. Today most of them are still in London, in the British Library, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral and St George's Church Bloomsbury. One

item from the Company's collections that is no longer in London happens to be the above-mentioned painting by Benjamin West, which is on permanent loan to Powys Castle, a property in Wales run by the National Trust. The dispersal of the objects has blurred Britain's associations with the East India Company, so the unique shared provenance of these objects has been overlooked.

As one of the longest surviving multinational companies in the world, the East India Company's art collections are undisputedly the most interesting corporately gathered art collection in existence. These historic artworks are linked to, and some would say are part of, a voluminous archive. The East India Company wrote a lot about itself, particularly its finances. If the Court of Directors decided to commission a painting, then the details of the commission, such as the amount of money paid to the artist, were recorded. The East India Company's records, today preserved inside the British Library's India Office Collections, connect with the artworks, revealing a multitude of varied circumstances behind its London-based operations. Sometimes these circumstances relate to basic financial issues, while other times, the records reveal how artworks are linked with diplomatic incidents, battles, vendettas, lawsuits, government interventions, and scandals.

Looking at the artworks in tandem with the records is the key to exploring the East India Company's history of patronage and collecting. The records begin at the very start of the seventeenth century and extend to the mid-nineteenth century, but the information in these documents inevitably reflects the Company's London-based objectives. All the paintings, sculptures, and buildings considered in this book show how the Company represented its activities to a London-based audience. About 31 of the artworks were commissions approved by the Court of Directors and were recorded as such in the East India Company's Court Minutes. Those that weren't commissioned were either purchased directly from artists in London or were gifted or bequeathed to the Company. In the case of Indian sculpture, some were gifted by Company servants who removed the objects from India, while others were shipped to London under Company instructions.

Some might regard this book as a catalogue *raisonne* of a corporately gathered art collection, but it also reveals new frameworks for the study of the East India Company's history. Picking up on the pioneering work of Margot Finn and Kate Smith, these pages demonstrate that objects are a form of historical documentation. Instead of viewing these collections of sculpture and paintings as "passive backdrops against which human agency occurs", they can be treated as "active historical agents" that illuminate new corners of the East India Company's history.<sup>4</sup> Bringing together the East India Company's collections into a single dedicated study is a way to initiate new conversations and explore new narratives about its history and transformation from a trading company to an imperial power.

The East India Company is a unique example of a multinational corporation that continuously operated over three centuries. It was controlled not by a particular individual but by a Court of Directors. These 14 men represented the Company's shareholders, each serving a maximum four-year term which allowed the court's membership to change and adapt to new circumstances. Today, the term "court" is more commonly associated with royal households with a monarch or aristocrat at its centre. Once the ruler at the court's centre died, he or she was replaced, and a new court based around a new

monarch would emerge. According to James Mill, the East India Company followed a joint stock model as early as 1612, making it, by definition, a legal individual under English law.<sup>5</sup> Unlike a royal court, this “individual” could survive for as long as its perpetually changing Court of Directors kept it alive. The East India Company’s legal status as an individual, paired with the sometimes haphazard and other times calculated decisions made by its Court of Directors, resulted in its survival for over 250 years. With each new generation of directors, it adapted to new circumstances. Its longevity allowed it to commission and collect artworks for a quarter of a millennium.

This book links its subject to “corporate art”, even though contemporary definitions of this term can’t be applied to a company founded in 1600. “Corporate art” broadly relates to the shift in patronage that occurred in the nineteenth century, when publicly owned corporations, as opposed to wealthy individuals, the ruling classes, and religious institutions, became art collectors. The East India Company’s collections stand at a perplexing juncture for this nineteenth-century definition. Its earliest artworks were commissioned in the pre-modern period and reflect an older corporate art tradition characterised by “the hanging of decorative works and portraits of founders and directors to beautify a boardroom and honour a firm’s standing or reputation”.<sup>6</sup> The East India Company’s early artworks, particularly those placed in the Directors’ Courtroom of East India House in the 1740s, conform with this description. However, by the nineteenth century, the Company was collecting artworks that reflected the outward aims of modern corporate collections, such as education and philanthropy. As early as 1773, the Company commissioned a portrait of Robert Clive founding the East India Company’s pension scheme, which was exhibited in the Royal Academy before being installed in the Company’s pension office, a clear case of art expressing a corporation’s societal aims. [Figure 4.1] Likewise, in the nineteenth century, the East India Company ran a museum that aimed to educate Britain’s public about its activities in Asia. There appears to be no other example in Britain, or in the world, of such a long-lived relationship between a corporation and art.

### Printed sources

Besides keeping records, the East India Company also codified its actions in officially sanctioned publications which understandably posited it as a protagonist. The most famous of these writers were Robert Orme (1728–1801) and James Mill (1773–1836), who both worked as East India Company employees in London. Orme wrote his two-volume work, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, as well as a book about the Mughal Empire, and another about the Marathas. In his role as the East India Company’s historiographer from 1769 to 1801, his books were predictably filled with praise for the Company’s actions. James Mill didn’t hold Orme’s distinguished title of official historiographer, but he was an employee of high rank who owed his position to the Company’s enthusiasm for his *History of British India*. Orientalist scholars such as Charles Wilkins (1745–1836) and William Jones (1746–1794) also received the East India Company’s sanction. In the frontispiece of Wilkins’s English translation of the Bhagavad Gita he wrote, “[t]he following work is published under the authority of the Court of Directors of the East India Company”.<sup>7</sup>

The Company also published pamphlets and tracts that promoted its official take on historical events. Most famously, in 1624 the East India Company authored *A True Relation of the Unjust, Cruell and Barbarous Proceedings against the English at Amboyna* to fuel anti-Dutch sentiments amongst high-ranking men. Just like Mill's multivolume history of India, seventeenth-century pamphlets promoted narratives that fit whatever image the East India Company backed. Many of the artworks discussed in this book directly visualise versions of history that were propounded in these books and pamphlets.

The late colonial writings of Mildred Archer and William Foster have been important sources of information for this project. William Foster (1863–1951) was the first scholar to research and write specifically about the East India Company's historic artworks as a collection, and Mildred Archer (1911–2005), the librarian responsible for curating the India Office Library's prints and drawings collections from 1954 to 1980, expanded Foster's project. Predictably, their work is imbued with the historical assumptions and myths of empire that were typical of the early to mid-twentieth century, but if one looks beyond their imperialist rhetoric, Foster's and Archer's writings contain valuable trails of archival references about the artworks. By following these leads and viewing their work through a revisionist lens, additional contexts are revealed. These late colonial writings, if read with an awareness of their imperialist leanings, are a bountiful mine of information.

There have been numerous recent publications on the East India Company's corporate artworks. These usually discuss some of the Company's art collections, clubbing them alongside artworks from a much broader range of sources to situate them within broader colonial contexts. One of the first comprehensive overviews of the East India Company's history through artworks, published in 1990, was Christopher Bayly's *The Raj: India and the British 1600–1947*. It accompanied an exhibition of the same name at London's National Portrait Gallery. Through contributions by Peter Marshall, Christopher Pinney, Francis Robinson, Brian Allen, John Falconer, Giles Tillotson, and Partha Mitter, it ambitiously covers three and a half centuries of Indian history. Other books that mention the East India Company's commissioned artworks have more circumscribed themes such as Hermione Almeida and George Gilpin's *Indian Renaissance* (2005), which looks at English artists who travelled throughout the East Indies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Romita Ray's *Under the Banyan Tree* (2013) pinpoints a particular genre, British landscape painting, and defines the term "Indian Picturesque" to show how a multitude of printed images helped Britons locate themselves "as denizens of a common empire".<sup>8</sup> Geoff Quilley's *British Art and the East India Company* (2020) gives an overview of maritime painting, portraiture, and topographical views to plot how the Company visualised its trade with the East. Whilst these books, and others that are mentioned in the proceeding pages, do not specifically tie their analyses with the East India Company's corporately gathered artworks, they look at many objects considered in this book within equally valuable frameworks.

Perhaps one reason why a dedicated study of the East India Company's collections hasn't previously been pursued is because of claims that there are too few artworks with a direct Company provenance to make such a study viable. One frequently repeated source claims that, besides the suite of artworks installed in the Directors Courtroom

in the 1740s, “only about seven more oil paintings and another nine sculptures were commissioned by the Directors”.<sup>9</sup> This assumption, echoed in other writings,<sup>10</sup> may explain why this subject has not been recognised as the topic of a single book.

Another area where little research has prevailed is the relationship between the Western artworks commissioned by the Company and the vast quantities of Asian sculpture that were displayed inside East India House. The Company’s collections of Western sculpture have been eloquently studied by Joan Coutu, Sarah Burnage, and Phiroze Vasunia, all of whom contextualise the sculptures within Britain’s eighteenth-century history, showing how they connect with an overseas empire and neoclassical influences. Most research on the Indian sculptures connects them with the broader context of the India Museum, as seen in recent work by Arthur Macgregor. The Company’s Western and Asian sculpture collections are generally viewed as unconnected, even though they were collected by the same corporate individual.

New research on the connections between the East India Company and oil paintings usually sidesteps a chronological approach, favouring more creative modes of classification to address the relationship between art and imperialism.<sup>11</sup> For example, John McAleer’s *Picturing India* (2017) and Geoff Quilley’s *British Art and the East India Company* (2020) both organise their chapters according to genre, steering away from conventional, linear art-historical narratives.<sup>12</sup> Whilst classifying art according to genre is also important to this book, these frameworks are introduced in chronological order to link the collections with the historical narratives the Company manufactured to abet its survival. Categorisation by genre, style, and provenance is necessary, but these artworks are most easily understood within a chronological framework that follows changes within the East India Company.

Most studies of the East India Company and art focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when British painting and sculpture were systemically linked with the rise of an overseas empire and the growth of imperialist nationalism. Whilst the standard image of the East India Company as a militarised, imperialist entity is accurate, it only applies to the latter part of its history. In the seventeenth century, the Company was a fragile corporate entity dogged by instability and often rendered too weak to defend its commercial operations. It was so poorly financed in the mid-seventeenth century that for years at a time, it didn’t send ships to its trade settlements in Asia. The servants at these factories, abandoned by their employers in London, often died, while those who survived coped with their abandonment by shifting their allegiances towards Asian trade networks.<sup>13</sup> Although there are few Company artworks from the seventeenth century, those that we know of speak volumes about the unstable, chaotic conditions it somehow survived.

The East India Company’s first meeting, in late December 1600, was held in the Nag’s Head, a public house in the City of London. Its headquarters remained in the City of London until 1861, when its final location, a titanic stone building that stretched along 200 feet of Leadenhall Street, was torn down. An auction notice from 1861 describes it as containing 38 miles of office partitioning, enough to extend from the City of London to the sea beyond the mouth of the Thames.<sup>14</sup> Between these spectacularly different beginning and end locations, in no particular order, the East India Company’s Court of Directors steered it through numerous permutations, all the while



promoting its actions through art as anti-Dutch, anti-French, pro-Parliament, pro-Monarchy, a litigious monster, the fashionable promoter of Britain's overseas empire, a tax collector, a sanctuary for drug dealers, the founder of the first-ever corporate pension scheme, a war monger, the founder of a museum, and the imperious controller of India's education system. In this book's chapters, the Company's perpetually changing image is identified by the artworks, beginning with a portrait of a Persian trade ambassador from the 1620s [Figure 1.3] and ending with a marble statue of the Duke of Wellington made in 1855. [Figure 6.6]

## Chapters

Chapter 1 looks at the Company's early years, from 1600 up to the early 1740s, when it inhabited a succession of headquarters in the City of London. Having a physical location is what made it possible for the Company to assemble a small collection of artworks. The chapter ends in 1745, the moment before the East India Company established a private army in India. The seventeenth-century artworks reveal the unstable, conflicted, "Hobbesian nightmare" that nearly destroyed the Company.<sup>15</sup> In the early eighteenth century, this chaotic image was supplanted by one of strength and respectability following Britain's Act of Union and the Company's reconfiguration as the United East India Company. A new East India House was built out of stone, and at its centre, a perfectly cubical room was constructed where the Company's directors held court. Inside the new Directors' Court Room, a suite of artworks and furnishings emanated an image of respectable affluence to the Company's shareholders. Despite this makeover, the Company continued to commission paintings in the early 1740s that belied its respectability.

The following two chapters are about the East India Company's artworks in the mid- to late eighteenth century. Chapter 2 is on the earliest landscapes of India to be publicly exhibited in London by a British artist who had travelled on the Subcontinent. Francis Swain Ward was a soldier-artist who served in the Madras Army during the Carnatic Wars, in the mid-eighteenth century. The Company purchased ten of his landscape paintings in 1773 and had them placed in matching frames for display inside East India House's Committee of Correspondence Room. Before this purchase, Ward's paintings were publicly exhibited with the Society of Artists, a rival of the Royal Academy, between 1765 and 1773. They predate the landscapes made by Royal Academicians like William Hodges and Thomas and William Daniell by at least a decade. Ward's work has been overlooked, even though it links early imperialist art with the East India Company's telling of the Carnatic Wars.

The third chapter looks at seven neoclassical portrait sculptures that were all commissioned by the East India Company in the second half of the eighteenth century. They show their subjects dressed in either togas or Roman military costume, casting them as martial, political, or intellectual leaders. The earliest of these sculptures, commissioned in 1760, alluded to the Company's new military establishment, showing Robert Clive, Stringer Lawrence, and George Pocock dressed as Roman generals. The later sculptures, commissioned in the 1790s, connect King George III, Lord Charles Cornwallis, and Sir William Jones with the Company's changing statecraft.

## INTRODUCTION

The neoclassical portrait sculptures provide a framework to help understand changes to the East India Company's image in the late eighteenth century.

Chapter 4 looks at some of the scandals and controversies that confronted the Company in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most of the Company's collections highlight its manipulative tendencies, but it wasn't until the 1770s that its commissioned artworks became direct responses to its corporate misbehaviour. These scandals either related directly to the Company's operations in the City of London or to the actions of high-ranking Company servants such as Robert Clive and Warren Hastings. Some of the Company's commissioned artworks from this period were attempts to divert public attention away from scandals, while others show thematic shifts that made the artworks less objectionable. For example, in the 1760s, the Company commissioned several portraits of living individuals, but following the suicide of Robert Clive in 1774, it didn't commission a single portrait of a living person for two decades. Celebrating the achievements of the living became risky, so the Company only memorialised the actions of the dead.

The book's next two chapters explore the meanings of artworks during the penultimate decades of the Company's existence. Chapter 5 is about sculptures from India that were displayed inside East India House in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The circumstances behind their shipment from India to London connect with changes to the Company's bureaucratic framework. By the 1830s, in consequence of losing its trade monopolies in Asia, the Company made thousands of job cuts, culling its labouring workforce in its docklands and warehouses. Having lost its celebrated status as a benevolent employer of civilian labour in London, the Company's India Museum became a way to rejuvenate its public reputation. New gallery spaces were created inside East India House at a time of intense change, allowing its collections to expand and its benevolent reputation to continue under a new educative guise.

Chapter 6 is about the Company's transformation into a bureaucratic entity, using artworks the Company commissioned in the nineteenth century as its springboard. Two of these were memorial sculptures for places of worship. The others were located inside working areas of East India House and were displayed alongside the Company's legacy collections. This helped the Company dilute its military image, as shown in the earlier commissions, and allowed it to recast itself as a bureaucratic, political arm of Britain's overseas empire. This transformation involved Robert Clive's reinvention as a hero of empire in the nineteenth century, which was literally connected with the redecoration of the Company's corridors. From the loss of its trade monopolies to the implementation of Anglicist political policies in South Asia, the nineteenth-century commissions show how the Company promoted its political, bureaucratic role.

The book's concluding chapter examines the afterlife of the East India Company's collections. It starts by looking at the tearing down of East India House and the displacement of its collections. It then looks at the India Office building in Whitehall, where the Company's operations, which were placed under the control of the British Government, were shifted. The East India Company's artworks, and the stories they told, were quietly absorbed into the fabric of the British Raj. The chapter concludes by looking at the East India Company's three images of Robert Clive, acquired between 1760 and 1820, and how the British state reinterpreted these artworks when they were moved into the India Office in Whitehall.



### Circumscribing the collections

The Company's historic art collections are a data set that visualises how a multinational corporation justified its existence for three centuries. By contextualising the circumstances behind the artworks' creation and acquisition, one can identify key moments when the Company tried to control its history by asserting dominant narratives and suppressing alternative versions of events. One theme that runs throughout this book is the impermanence of meaning. The East India Company's collective authority had amnesiac tendencies, and the meanings of artworks were often forgotten within three decades of their creation or acquisition. In 30 years, the Company's directors were replaced by men with new agendas. For example, the ten landscape paintings by Francis Swain Ward, which the Company purchased in 1773 to commemorate its imperialist expansion during the Carnatic Wars, were no longer associated with these military events by the early nineteenth century. Originally displayed inside a single room, at least half of the Ward landscapes were removed from their exclusive, private space and relocated to the India Museum, where they were displayed alongside a mash-up of unrelated objects.

While the Indian sculptures from East India House were shared out between the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum in the late 1870s, the British artworks remained in the India Office building in Whitehall until the mid-1960s. In 1982 they became part of the British Library's collections, along with the India Office Library's records, manuscripts, printed books, maps, drawings, and other ephemera. Today, the East India Company's British artworks are the core of the British Library's Visual Arts section, but their unique provenance is buried under other art collections. A handful of the larger East India Company artworks have remained inside the India Office building in Whitehall, which is now part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but most of them are stored inside the British Library's main building on Euston Road.

Many of the most popularly recognised artworks from the British Library's India Office Collections were not collected by the East India Company. The picturesque landscapes of William Hodges and by Thomas and William Daniell, as well as the paintings of Johann Zoffany, joined the India Office Collections in the twentieth century, long after the East India Company was disbanded, under the curatorship of William Foster, Mildred Archer and Jeremiah P. Losty.<sup>16</sup> They were acquired to fill in gaps in an important art collection, but in so doing, the characteristics of the original East India Company collections were obfuscated. The artworks obtained for the India Office Collections after 1858 are not included in this book, so none of the paintings by Thomas and William Daniell, William Hodges, and Johann Zoffany are included. These artists received patronage from individuals who were employed by the East India Company in the late eighteenth century. These privately owned paintings and objects were then transported to Britain as mementoes of lives in another part of the world and were displayed inside private homes.<sup>17</sup> In the early twentieth century, when many of Britain's large country houses were sold off, these paintings entered London's art market.

The East India Company's corporate collections differed from privately commissioned paintings in some key respects. The famous landscape paintings of William Hodges

and the uncle-nephew team Thomas and William Daniell were the property of private collectors and not the Company. Instead of acquiring oil paintings by these famous Royal Academicians, the East India Company purchased books of aquatints based on their paintings and deposited them in its library.<sup>18</sup>

Portraiture in private collections also differed from the East India Company's artworks. Family portraits were an important feature of Georgian country homes,<sup>19</sup> so British patrons residing in India commissioned portraits of family members, including women and children. Sometimes, the Western sitters in these portraits wore Indian dress. By contrast, the East India Company exclusively commissioned portraits of men, with the only representations of women inside East India House being allegorical figures such as Britannia. Likewise, portraits commissioned by the Company consistently show European sitters in European dress. This could be classical Roman attire, military uniforms, or the contemporary clothing of a British gentleman. Non-European sitters in Company-commissioned portraiture wore clothing that highlighted their foreignness, emphasising the cultural differences between Western and non-Western sitters. Inside East India House, there was no crossover between the dress of European and non-European subjects.

Today more than ever, with the dominance of the internet, visual culture has become a powerful tool to manipulate history. To investigate the East India Company's corporately assembled art collections, some of which have come to represent commonly believed interpretations of imperial history, we need to pick apart the origin stories of these artworks. The East India Company used art to enhance its reputation, and by exploring these storylines, pertinent readings of its history are revealed.

## Notes

- 1 Treaty of Allahabad, BL, Mss Eur G49.
- 2 William Dalrymple, *The Anarchy: The Relentless Rise of the East India Company* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), xxviii–xxix, 208, colour opening at the centre of the book.
- 3 James Mill, *The History of British India* (London: James Madden, 1817), vol. 4, ch. 3, 7.
- 4 Margot Finn and Kate Smith, *The East India Company at Home 1757–1857* (London: UCL Press, 2018), 18.
- 5 James Mill, *History*, vol.1, 19.
- 6 C Appleyard and J Salzman, *Corporate Art Collections: A Handbook to Corporate Buying* (London: Sothebys Institute of Art, 2012), 12.
- 7 Charles Wilkins, *The Bhagavat-geeta* (London: J Nourse, 1785).
- 8 Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013), 15.
- 9 Pauline Rohatgi and Graham Parlett, *Indian Life and Landscape* (London: V&A 2008), 47.
- 10 Geoff Quilley, *British Art and the East India Company* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), 17, note 32.
- 11 Hermione de Almeida and George Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (Yale University Press, 2013); John McAleer, *Picturing India* (London: British Library, 2017); Geoff Quilley, *British Art and the East India Company* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2020).
- 12 Quilley, *British Art*, 17.
- 13 David Veevers, *The Origins of the British Empire in Asia, 1600–1750* (Cambridge UP, 2020), 51.
- 14 Catalogue for East India House's clearance auction in 1861. BL, IOR/H/763.

## INTRODUCTION

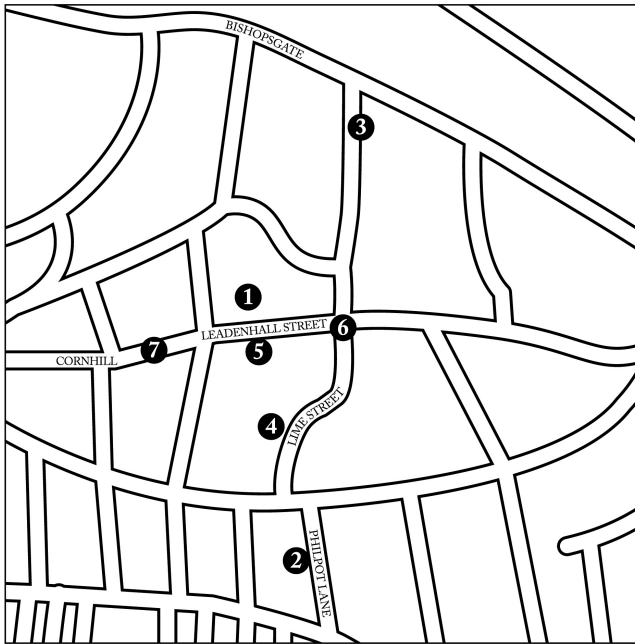
- 15 Veevers, *Origins*, 78.
- 16 Hodges's paintings were collected in 1904 (BL, Foster 94) and 1917 (BL, Foster 396). William Daniell's painting was collected in 1917 (BL, Foster 167). Thomas Daniell's paintings were collected in 1915 (BL, Foster 577) and 1938 (BL, Foster 669). Zoffany's paintings were collected in 1906 (BL, Foster 106 and 108), 1925 (BL, Foster 597), and 1989 (BL, Foster 854).
- 17 Finn and Smith, *The East India Company at Home*.
- 18 Catherine Pickett, *Bibliography of the East India Company* (London: British Library, 2015), 10, #54; 77, #495.
- 19 Margot Finn, "Swallowfield Park, Berkshire: From Royalist Bastion to Empire Home", in *The East India Company at Home*, ed. Margot Finn and Kate Smith (London: UCL Press, 2018), 216.

# CHAOS TO CONFIDENCE

The artworks commissioned by the East India Company in the first half of its history are amongst its most fascinating. They document the trials and chaos that the Company somehow overcame when its key agenda in London was to make money for its shareholders through trade. Most studies of early Company-commissioned artworks focus on the items made in the 1730s to decorate the interior of East India House on Leadenhall Street. Because of this, most studies of the East India Company and art begin in the early eighteenth century, ignoring the unusual commissions of the seventeenth century.

Before construction of East India House began in the late 1720s, the Company occupied at least five different locations in the City of London, the square mile of territory inside the Roman walls of Londinium. Its first meeting was held on 31 December 1600, inside the Nag's Head, a public house on the north side of Leadenhall Street, roughly across the street from where East India House would later stand. It was attended by a group of merchants who had received a charter from Queen Elizabeth Tudor to begin trading as "The Governor and Company of Merchants of London, trading into the East-Indies". The Company's subsequent premises were all a short distance from this original meeting place. These were Sir Thomas Smyth's house on Philpot Lane (1600–1621), Crosby House on Bishopsgate (1621–1638), Sir Christopher Clitherow's house near Lime Street (1638–1648), Craven House on the south side of Leadenhall Street (1648–1725), and a temporary location on Fenchurch Street that was used in the 1720s, after Craven House was torn down (1725–1729). All these buildings were demolished, except for Crosby House, which was moved, brick by brick, to another part of London in 1910.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter is structured chronologically according to the houses where the East India Company conducted business from 1600 until 1745. These premises provide a meaningful context to view the Company's early art commissions. The chapter's cut-off date is 1745 because in the late 1740s the Company established its private army in South Asia, triggering its development from a trading company to an imperial power. As its army grew, the Company's commissioned artworks increasingly became expressions of imperial strength and territorial expansion. The items examined in this chapter reveal the Company's early misfortunes and struggles before 1745, which were largely brought on by diplomatic failures with non-Western cultures, conflicts with rival European trading companies, and political instability in England. By the early eighteenth century, its commissioned artworks exuded confidence, rationality,



*Figure 1.1.* Locations of the East India Company's different headquarters in the seventeenth century and associated structures in the City of London. 1. The Nag's Head (1600); 2. Thomas Smythe's House (1600–1621); 3. Crosby Hall (1621–1638); 4. Christopher Clitherow's House (1638–1648); 5. Craven House (1648–1725); 6. First arch of King Charles II's coronation procession (1661); 7. The Mariner's Gateway, second arch of King Charles II's coronation procession (1661). © Nick Beresford-Davies.

and respectability. Starting in a pub and ending in East India House, the locations the Company inhabited between 1600 and 1745 provide a framework for examining the artworks.

### The early East India Company in context

Before the East India Company's formation in 1600, England had access to goods from the Middle East and Asia through middlemen from Venice and Portugal who controlled the markets for spices and silk. Before Queen Elizabeth Tudor came to power, spices were delivered to London by

an annual vessel ... from Venice, well supplied with such rich goods; and by this means, such commodities might be dear, since it was in the Power of the State of Venice to raise them almost to what Prices she would.<sup>2</sup>

By 1600, London's mercantile community was large enough to support new investment opportunities. The economy was ripe for establishing a trading company that would

independently funnel luxury goods from the East to London, allowing English businessmen to directly profit from their distribution.

Voyages to the East began immediately after the Company's formation,<sup>3</sup> and by 1620 it had established factories along India's coastlines, at Surat and Machilipatnam. Further east, factories were established in Japan, Thailand, and on the "Spice Islands" of Sumatra, Java, the Moluccas, and Banda. The Company's most profitable import in its early years was pepper from the Spice Islands. Textiles were purchased in India, but instead of importing these to England, they were shipped to the Spice Islands and traded for commodities like pepper, which were far more profitable in London than Indian cloth. Persian cloth was more desirable at that time, and it wasn't until after 1620 that the Company began importing Indian textiles to London.<sup>4</sup>

The Portuguese had previously been the main importers of Persian textiles to England. An early attempt to establish direct trade with the East was made in 1562, when Queen Elizabeth sent her envoy, Anthony Jenkinson (1529–1610), to Persia to set up trade in silk fabrics and carpets between Persia and England. The mission was a failure, but it shows that in the sixteenth century there was a desire to establish direct trade for these products in England.<sup>5</sup> By the seventeenth century, domestic rivalries in Portugal and Spain had weakened the "Portuguese Estado da India", making it easier for the English and the Dutch to set up trade in Asia. In the Company's early decades, its trading posts operated alongside those of Holland's trading company, the "Vereenigde Ost-Indische Compagnie", or VOC, which was founded in 1602. Of the two nascent trading companies, the Dutch company was stronger. It has been estimated that in 1602, the year the VOC was founded, it possessed ten times the capital of England's East India Company.<sup>6</sup> In 1619 the English Company and the VOC established the Treaty of Defence, whereby the English and Dutch connected their commercial operations in the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>7</sup> However, this coexistence was more advantageous to the VOC, with the English company's lack of investment making it difficult to compete.

The East India Company's early decades were beset with problems. It struggled with the basic logistics of transporting goods from one side of the world to another and frequently lost control of its isolated trading posts in Asia. Servants of the East India Company were tasked with establishing these trading posts, known as factories, in remote areas that could take over half a year to reach by ship. Sometimes the people at these factories died, and other times they were abandoned for years at a time in unfamiliar locations. The Company's ships, known as East Indiamen, were vulnerable to the elements, piracy, and the disloyalty of their own crews. A myriad of circumstances, sometimes natural and other times man made, could destroy a trade mission that determined the fortunes of the Company's investors. Other problems concerned the Company's relationships with rival European trade companies and dangerous cultural misunderstandings with non-Western partners. This rough, unpredictable terrain perpetually imperilled the Company's existence.

In the early seventeenth century the East India Company was one of several English trading companies that were founded by royal charter. Such companies received a "letter patent" from the monarch granting trade privileges to adventurers, giving the exclusive right to hold a monopoly and perform a particular activity in a defined geographical region. The purpose of most companies was to organise trade. The oldest

English “letters patent” company was the Muscovy Company, founded in 1555, when a quest to find a sea route over the Scandinavian Peninsula to China resulted in contact with what is now Russia. Other companies established by letters patents included the Levant Company (1600), the Virginia Company (1606), the Newfoundland Company (1610), and the Somers Isles Company (1615). Later in the seventeenth century, these were joined by the Royal Africa Company (1660) and the Hudson’s Bay Company (1670). The letters patents that created trading companies were defined by their powers of “exclusivity, incorporation, and self-governance” and “varied significantly from body to body”.<sup>8</sup>

The East India Company differed from other English companies in several significant ways. Most conspicuously, it traded over a vast geographical area, taking in everywhere from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan.<sup>9</sup> Another difference was that it managed to retain a collection of artworks that are still identifiable today. If other royal charter companies in London collected artworks in the seventeenth century, these objects either no longer exist, or their provenance is no longer identifiable. The most likely reason for the continued existence of the East India Company’s seventeenth-century artworks was its continued occupation of a physical headquarters in the City of London. Unlike other royal charter companies, the East India Company maintained a location where its artworks could be housed.

### **Thomas Smythe’s house (1600–1621)**

After its initial formation at a public house called the Nag’s Head, the East India Company’s first headquarters was inside the home of its first governor, Sir Thomas Smythe, on Philpot Lane.<sup>10</sup> Little is known about Thomas Smythe’s house, but one can assume that it served a perfunctory role, probably providing a single room where the Company’s main shareholders could assemble. Other royal charter companies at that time had similar arrangements, such as the Levant Company, which held its court meetings “at the Governor’s house”.<sup>11</sup>

### **Crosby House (1621–1638)**

It wasn’t until the 1620s, after the Company moved out of Thomas Smythe’s house, that it began to acquire oil paintings. The Company’s first known artworks were commissioned for display inside Crosby House, suggesting that it was a more spacious location than Thomas Smythe’s house. Crosby House’s desirable proportions are alluded to in a request the Levant Company issued in 1623, resolving to ask the East India Company for use of Crosby House for its meetings in exchange for “the conveyance of their letters out of Persia”.<sup>12</sup> The Levant Company’s request suggests that, of the royal charter companies headquartered in the City of London in 1623, the East India Company had a superior location. Having a physical space where objects could be displayed most likely facilitated the East India Company’s early artwork commissions.

In the early 1620s, the English company’s directors in London wanted to separate their operations from the Dutch on the Spice Islands of Micronesia.<sup>13</sup> This required the East India Company to break the Treaty of Defence of 1619. Before it took any



formal action to break ties with the VOC, an incident arose on the island of Amboyna (Ambon, Indonesia). The Dutch had a trading station there, which was also used by the English, for the exportation of cloves.<sup>14</sup> In February 1623, ten Englishmen were captured by the Dutch, who claimed they were plotting to invade the VOC's factory. English accounts of the incident describe how the Dutch executed the ten Englishmen after extracting false confessions through torture. In September 1623 news reached London of these events,<sup>15</sup> and in January 1624 The East India Company demanded 70,000 florins from the VOC as compensation for the damage and distress caused at Amboyna.<sup>16</sup> The Dutch reacted to this demand by publishing "a Pamphlet in print in the Netherlands Language ... in justification of this barbarous butchery".<sup>17</sup> It was translated into English and distributed in London,<sup>18</sup> causing fury over the VOC's absence of contrition.<sup>19</sup> The East India Company retaliated by publishing a pamphlet giving its version of events, which was distributed to men of power and position in England.<sup>20</sup> The pamphlet gave gory descriptions of how the ten men were tortured by waterboarding, stretching, and burning sensitive parts of their bodies, then were placed in a dungeon where their injuries putrefied before being tortured again.<sup>21</sup> To further convey the horror of their sufferings, the pamphlet was illustrated with a woodcut print showing how the tortures were inflicted.<sup>22</sup> The East India Company seized onto the news of the Amboyna incident and publicised its gruesome telling of events to stir anti-Dutch sentiments, most likely in the hope of extracting compensation from the VOC and ending the Treaty of Defence of 1619.

The incident at Amboyna was the subject of the first painting that the East India Company commissioned. Titled "The Atrocities at Amboyna", it was intended to prompt Parliament into assisting the East India Company with its grievances against the Dutch. This graphic reminder of the VOC's treachery was the first known oil painting to be displayed inside Crosby House. Richard Greenbury (fl.1616–1651), a London-based painter and decorator of furniture, was commissioned to create the scene, which conveyed how the men at Amboyna were tortured. It so powerfully highlighted "the ingratitude and betrayal of the Dutch" that the Company had to ask Greenbury to repaint part of it.<sup>23</sup> The East India Company's pamphlet on the Amboyna incident, published and distributed in around December 1624, would have already generated curiosity over the painting.<sup>24</sup> In late February 1625, when it went on display inside Crosby Hall,<sup>25</sup> its prominent position ensured that all those who entered the Company's headquarters were confronted by this odious moment of horror and suffering. One woman, purportedly a widow of one of the massacred men, fainted when she saw it.<sup>26</sup> The painting's graphic subject generated so much interest that crowds flocked to see it at Richard Greenbury's studio before it was even completed. According to William Foster, it created such outrage that London's Dutch residents had to appeal to King Charles I's Privy Council for protection.<sup>27</sup>

Only two weeks after the painting went on display inside Crosby House, the Crown intervened when "Lord Duke [of Buckingham] sent for the picture" of "the torment at Amboyna" and took it away.<sup>28</sup> George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, was a favourite in the court of King Charles I, and an important art collector in the 1620s who informed personal tastes at court.<sup>29</sup> Immediately after the Amboyna painting's removal, it went missing, and was presumably destroyed. One suspects that the Company's directors were taken by surprise by the Privy Council's prompt decision to



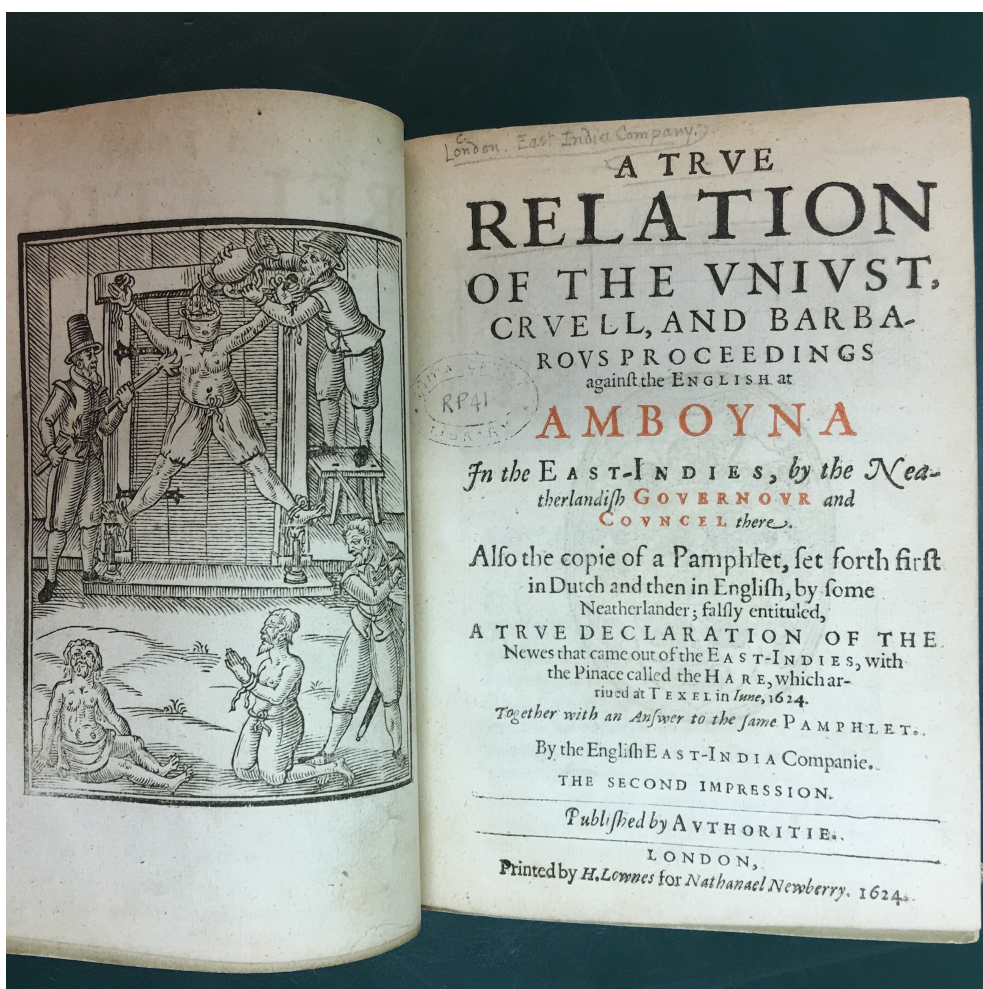


Figure 1.2. Frontispiece and title page of the East India Company's pamphlet describing the Amboyna Massacre, 1624. British Library, T39923. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

seize the picture. In April 1625 Richard Greenbury still hadn't been paid for the painting and appeared before the Court of Directors to demand a hundred pounds for his vanished efforts.<sup>30</sup> It was an optimistic price tag, even for such a large painting, which Greenbury had to lower. By comparison, a large portrait of King Charles I's five eldest children by Antony Van Dyck fetched exactly the same price in 1637. Eventually the Company agreed to pay Greenbury 40 pounds.<sup>31</sup>

The first artwork to be commissioned by the East India Company promoted an interpretation of the Amboyna incident that helped its directors in London achieve their aims. It was most likely based on images that the Company supplied to Greenbury,

making the woodcut illustrations inside the Company's pamphlet of 1624 the main visual record of how this peculiar painting might have looked. Both the pamphlet and the Greenbury painting promoted the East India Company's version of the incident, serving a business agenda to extract money from the Dutch and upend the Treaty of Defence of 1619. However, while the Company was fomenting anti-Dutch indignation in England, its employees in its Asian factories were getting on with business in proximity to the Dutch.

The Amboyna commission was a fiasco, with the King's Privy Council making it disappear. Perhaps this failure was what compelled the Company to commission another painting by the same artist less than 12 months later.<sup>32</sup> In 1626, Richard Greenbury began work on a pair of full-length portraits of Naqd Ali Beg, the trade envoy of Shah Abbas of Persia, who arrived in London in early February 1626.<sup>33</sup> One of the two portraits, measuring seven feet tall, has survived, and is now in the British Library's collections.<sup>34</sup> It shows a young man dressed in several layers of exceptionally high-quality, elaborately woven Persian silk garments. His iridescent gown contrasts with his brightly coloured sash and turban, and his heavy silk robe is woven with human figures. His attire effectively functions as a catalogue of the luxury goods that the Shah of Persia was offering to trade with the East India Company, through the sanction of King Charles I. Unfortunately, Naqd Ali Beg was not the sole envoy of Shah Abbas in London at that time, and his encounter with this rival ambassador resulted in a moment of disgrace that destroyed his reputation.

Shah Abbas of Persia was well known for his energetic approach to foreign diplomacy, which involved sending trade ambassadors to different European capitals.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, he sometimes sent out too many ambassadors at once, with disastrous consequences. This appears to be what happened in London in the mid-1620s, when Naqd Ali Beg was in London. Two years earlier, another trade envoy of Shah Abbas, the English adventurer Sir Robert Shirley, had arrived in London. The East India Company knew of Robert Shirley's arrival in 1624, but disputed his authority, claiming that there was "almost no possibility that Sr Robt Shirley should have any authentique power out of Persia to negotiate as an Ambassador",<sup>36</sup> and regarding his presence in London as an affront. Curiously, in the Company's minutes from 1625, when Shirley's name comes up, it appears alongside the Company's discussions of the Amboyna incident, suggesting that it viewed Shirley as equally threatening and problematic.<sup>37</sup>

When Naqd Ali Beg arrived in London in 1626 bearing letters from Shah Abbas of Persia, the East India Company threw its support behind this exotic newcomer, probably in the hope of supplanting Sir Robert Shirley's position at the court of King Charles I. Unfortunately, his first meeting with Robert Shirley was in the presence of the king, and it went extremely badly. Not only did Naqd Ali Beg declare Robert Shirley to be an imposter, he also, allegedly, struck him across the face. The behaviour of the two rival Persian ambassadors disgusted Charles I. He slighted Naqd Ali Beg, declaring that he and Shirley must return to Shah Abbas' court to sort out their differences.<sup>38</sup> This was not the only incident that had blighted Naqd Ali Beg's embassy to London. Other questions had arisen about his character, most likely from basic cultural and linguistic misunderstandings. He was considered coarse and quarrelsome, and his reputation was further damaged by a rumour that in London he was co-habiting with a "lewde strumpet".<sup>39</sup>



*Figure 1.3.* Portrait of Naqd Ali Beg by Richard Greenbury, 1626. British Library, Foster 23.  
Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



The East India Company chose to make light of his expulsion from the court of Charles I. As he prepared to return to Persia and face his destiny before Shah Abbas, the Company treated him with all the pomp and respect of a successful trade ambassador, presenting him with extravagant parting gifts such as “a Bason and Ewre of Silver with two Flaggon Potts to the valew of £50, and also his owne Picture, which is exactly and curiously drawne by Mr. Greenburie”.<sup>40</sup> The gifting of the silver ewer and basin, along with one of the two portraits by Richard Greenbury, must have been meaningless for Naqd Ali Beg, who now lived in terror of his reception at Shah Abbas’ court in Persia. By the time his ship reached the west coast of India, he had committed suicide after ingesting nothing but opium for four consecutive days.<sup>41</sup> Through death, he avoided the appalling punishment that most likely awaited him. According to Thomas Herbert, an Englishman who travelled on the same ship in 1627, when Shah Abbas learned of Naqd Ali Beg’s suicide he said, “it was well he poisoned himself, for had he come to court, his bodie should have been cut into three hundred sixty five pieces, and burnt in the open Mydan, or market place with Dogge turds”.<sup>42</sup> The East India Company’s copy of Naqd Ali Beg’s portrait was displayed inside Crosby House as a memento of an exotic foreign trade ambassador’s time in London, when, in fact, it was a ghostly reminder of the sloppy diplomacy that destroyed a man’s life. Naqd Ali Beg’s story was eventually forgotten, and by 1803, a written description of the very same painting described the sitter as “another nabob”.<sup>43</sup> As for the duplicate portrait the Company gave to Naqd Ali Beg in 1627, it most likely ended up, along with his corpse, at the bottom of the Arabian Sea.

The Greenbury paintings commissioned by the East India Company in the 1620s highlight its chaotic beginnings and manipulative nature. Establishing trade in other parts of the world and working alongside one’s competitors in faraway places was fraught with difficulties. From Crosby House in London, the Company scripted versions of events that scapegoated its misfortunes and overlooked its foibles. The Amboyna painting, the East India Company’s first documented commission, illustrated an event that was used to blackmail the Dutch. As for the portrait of Naqd Ali Beg, the East India Company had put this unfortunate man at the centre of a diplomatic incident that was so damning, his only escape was suicide.

The next painting to be acquired by the East India Company was a full-length portrait of a man from Poland. There is no information about the painting in the Company’s records, so the circumstances behind its acquisition are unknown. Based on the man’s costume, hairstyle, and pistol, it most likely dates to the 1620s or 1630s,<sup>44</sup> when the European trade in Persian textiles was linked with Poland. Although the East India Company was a maritime trading company in the seventeenth century, there was interest in overland trade with Persia and Turkey, which followed a route through central Europe. As the demand for Persian textiles and carpets increased in Western Europe, increasingly large quantities of goods passed along this overland trade route, which crossed Poland. The popularity of Persian and Turkish goods made them desirable amongst Poland’s nobility,<sup>45</sup> leading to the production of imitation Persian goods in Poland.<sup>46</sup>

The East India Company was interested in procuring these goods and wrote in its Court Minutes in January 1619 that it “should consider procuring a kind of calico worn in Poland by the ladies about their necks like towels”.<sup>47</sup> In 1630, when discussing



*Figure 1.4.* Portrait of a Polish man, c.1630. British Library, Foster 15. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

sales of cloth at Crosby House, the Company noted that some “will find vent for Turkey or Poland”.<sup>48</sup> Added to this, Polish trade ambassadors had travelled to London in 1621 and 1633. Perhaps ambassadorial contacts with Poland facilitated the painting’s acquisition for Crosby House.<sup>49</sup> The man is unmistakably Polish, with his hair cut short and a distinctive peak at the hairline’s centre. The powder horn and wheel-lock pistol hanging from his belt confirm the painting’s date, matching the weaponry used in Poland in the 1620s.<sup>50</sup> His costume, with its cloak, footwear, twisted sash-belt, and tunic, matches those worn by Polish soldiers in the early seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> It is evidence of the connection between the East India Company and Poland at that time. Just like the portrait of Naqd Ali Beg, the garments he wears might have shown the kinds of cloth that the Company sought to import. The fashion in Poland for Persian textiles meant that Polish noblemen and dignitaries wore similar garments,<sup>52</sup> which during the seventeenth century became early symbols of Polish national awareness, reflecting an emerging nationalist ideology.<sup>53</sup> The date of the painting certainly corresponds with the moment when the East India Company contemplated trade with Poland.

### Sir Christopher Clitherow’s House (1638–1648)

In 1638 the East India Company’s tenancy at Crosby House expired, and its landlord, the Earl of Northampton, demanded new “terms that were judged to be exorbitant”.<sup>54</sup> A new house was required, and Sir Christopher Clitherow (1578–1641), a prominent member of the East India Company who had served as the Mayor of London, offered tenancy in his house. While based at Sir Christopher Clitherow’s house, no new artworks were acquired, possibly because of a lack of space. In September 1642, shortly after Clitherow’s death, the Court of Directors recorded that on account of “the small accommodation they have for want of warehouse rooms [they] did thinke fit that a more convenient house shalbe looked out”.<sup>55</sup> The Company enquired about moving back into Crosby House in 1644,<sup>56</sup> and when this request failed, the search expanded for an alternative headquarters. In 1647 the Company arranged to move into Craven House.

During the Company’s occupation of Sir Christopher Clitherow’s house, the English Civil War broke out, causing financial instability in the City of London. Ships that might have been dispatched on trade missions to Asia were requisitioned for the war effort and demand for luxury goods declined. Expensive cloth became unfashionable because of puritanical aesthetics and trade focused on the distribution of essential commodities. The Company’s operations shrank, making it difficult to finance voyages to Asia. Company servants stationed at settlements in Asia were deserted, sometimes for decades at a time. Some factories were abandoned, while others, with no incentive to please their corporate masters in London, made their own private connections with Asian trade networks. A few servants independently established themselves “with boundless opportunities”,<sup>57</sup> such as Richard Hudson, a servant at Machilipatnam, who wrote in 1639 that without the Company’s assistance, he was empowered to do whatever he pleased.<sup>58</sup> Corporate neglect disintegrated the Company’s authority over its Asian factories, creating problems that were just as profound as the political and financial instability that prevailed in London.

### Craven House (1648–1725)

In 1647 the Company began preparing for the move to Craven House and was installed there by the summer of 1648.<sup>59</sup> A few months after their relocation, King Charles I was executed. The East India Company's existence was already imperilled by its inability to control its overseas operations. It now required the full support of Parliamentarians because of a more pressing threat. The Company's royal charter was due for renewal in 1654. With no precedent for renewing a royal charter without the authority of a monarch, the Company appealed to Oliver Cromwell to acknowledge its existence. Without the Lord Protector's approval, it would cease to exist.

In 1653, Oliver Cromwell decided not to renew the East India Company's charter, and it looked like it would disappear. Then in 1654 the first Anglo-Dutch War ended, with England victorious under Cromwell's command. In the Treaty of Westminster, which was signed in April 1654, the Dutch were instructed to pay the East India Company for its losses in the Spice Islands and to compensate the families of the men who died in the Amboyna Massacre. Through the treaty, the East India Company gained a place within Cromwell's statecraft, allowing it to limp along as a corporate entity in the City of London until the beginning of 1657. It still didn't have the substitute charter it required, so the Company gave the Lord Protector an ultimatum. At the end of one month, if no decision was made about the charter's renewal, the Company would abandon all its trade ventures in the East. Faced with this deadline, Cromwell finally issued a charter to the East India Company.

There is only one object connected with the East India Company from the Civil War period. It is a copy of an architectural fragment from the early 1650s. This large, round ceiling boss, bearing the East India Company's first coat of arms, is a plaster cast of an ornament that was set into the ceiling of Poplar Chapel, the East India Company's church in London's docklands, near the Company's almshouse.<sup>60</sup> The almshouse is no longer standing, but the chapel, which was renamed St. Matthias Church, is still in the London neighbourhood of Poplar.<sup>61</sup> Construction of the chapel began in 1652, and it was completed in 1654, the year that the East India Company's charter was due for renewal. It was built on East India Company land and paid for by private subscription.<sup>62</sup> The exterior of the chapel was changed in the nineteenth century, but its interior is believed to be the same as in the mid-seventeenth century. It is one of only three surviving churches in England that were constructed during the English Civil War.

In 1658, one year after the Company's treaty was renewed, Oliver Cromwell died. By 1660, King Charles I's exiled son had returned to London to be crowned King Charles II. The restoration of the monarchy brought a flurry of prosperity and demand for luxury foreign goods returned. However, the East India Company found itself, once again, in a state of crisis. Having renewed its expired charter in 1657 under Oliver Cromwell, the Company's existence now hinged upon reversing its political position and becoming a fervent supporter of the monarchy. Instead of commissioning oil paintings for display behind closed doors, as in the early seventeenth century, the Company's loyalty to the King was celebrated on the streets of London. Along with other mercantile establishments, the East India Company took part in the coronation celebrations of King Charles II. Two decorative structures were erected in 1661,





*Figure 1.5.* Plaster cast of the East India Company's coat of arms c.1654 from the ceiling of St Matthias Church, Poplar, London. British Library, Foster 859. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

ensuring that anyone who walked down Leadenhall Street knew about the East India Company's mercantile prosperity, adventurousness, and loyalty to the King. It distanced itself from the Parliamentary cause and publicly threw its support behind the monarchy. As for the charter that Cromwell issued the Company in 1657, it went missing and was most likely destroyed.

The first of these two structures was a triumphal gateway that King Charles II's coronation procession passed through on 22 April 1661. Known as the "Mariners Gate", it was located on Cornhill, and was approached immediately after the king's procession moved past Craven House on Leadenhall Street. It was one of four temporary



gateways sponsored by businesses and individuals seeking the King's favour along the procession's route.<sup>63</sup> The Mariners Gate expressed the continuity of England's monarchy, and the East India Company's support for Charles II. The Company's coat of arms, as it appeared on the ceiling boss of the East India Company's chapel at Poplar, was in the top-centre of the gate. Directly below the coat of arms was a square panel showing Charles II as a child, standing beside his father, Charles I, while gazing upon the 'Sovereign of the Seas', the largest and most famous battleship to be constructed in England in the seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> To the left and right of this square composition were personified figures of Asia, Africa, America, and Europe, holding flags bearing the insignias of various trading companies. Other figures on the gateway showed views of famous cities and personified rivers. At the very top was a figure of Atlas holding a globe on his shoulders, with a tall ship balanced above it. When Charles II's coronation procession moved through this gateway on 22 April 1661, three sailors sang a shanty from a specially constructed stage next to the arch. Besides extolling their loyalty to the monarchy, the singers proclaimed themselves as,

"All Merry Boys, and Loyal,  
 "Our Pockets full of Pay,  
 "This Triumphal Day".<sup>65</sup>

Their happy song, declaring their prosperity under Charles II's rule, was accompanied by six musicians "who made a Winde-Musick", and others who played drums and trumpets,<sup>66</sup> making this massive temporary structure into a public performance.

The second decorative project the Company commissioned in 1661 was the exterior of Craven House, which Charles II's coronation procession passed before reaching the Mariners Gate. Above Craven House's top windows, a large panel made of wood and plaster was erected that was painted with ships. The panel was flanked on either side by dolphins and topped with a statue of a mariner, with the Company's coat of arms set below it. The Craven House superstructure was completed in advance of the coronation ceremonies and was described on 17 April 1661, five days before the coronation, by Samuel Pepys who wrote that he "saw the pictures of the ships and other things this morning, set up before the East Indy House, which are well done". Craven House's newly decorated façade, with its unique maritime imagery, linked the Company's headquarters with the Mariners Gate. The superstructure also physically increased Craven House's size, making it appear an entire story taller.<sup>67</sup>

The Maritime Gate and the decorated façade of Craven House worked together "to represent the Companies loyall gratitude to His Majesty",<sup>68</sup> allowing the East India Company to explicitly connect itself with the monarchy. This enthusiasm for Charles II's accession to the throne was matched by the Company's eagerness to grant loans to the new monarch. Between 1660 and 1684, the Company lent him a total of £324,150,<sup>69</sup> and was rewarded by having its powers extended. Through the dowry of Catherine de Braganza, Charles II was granted ownership of Bombay from the Portuguese, and in 1668 he handed it over to the East India Company for a rent of ten pounds a year. In 1677 he then allowed the Company to issue its own coinage at Bombay. Through these changes, Bombay replaced Surat as the Company's main factory on India's west coast. In 1688 the Company was granted the right to occupy St



Figure 1.6. The Mariners Gate on Cornhill where King Charles II's coronation procession passed on 22 April 1661. British Library, 604.i.18. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

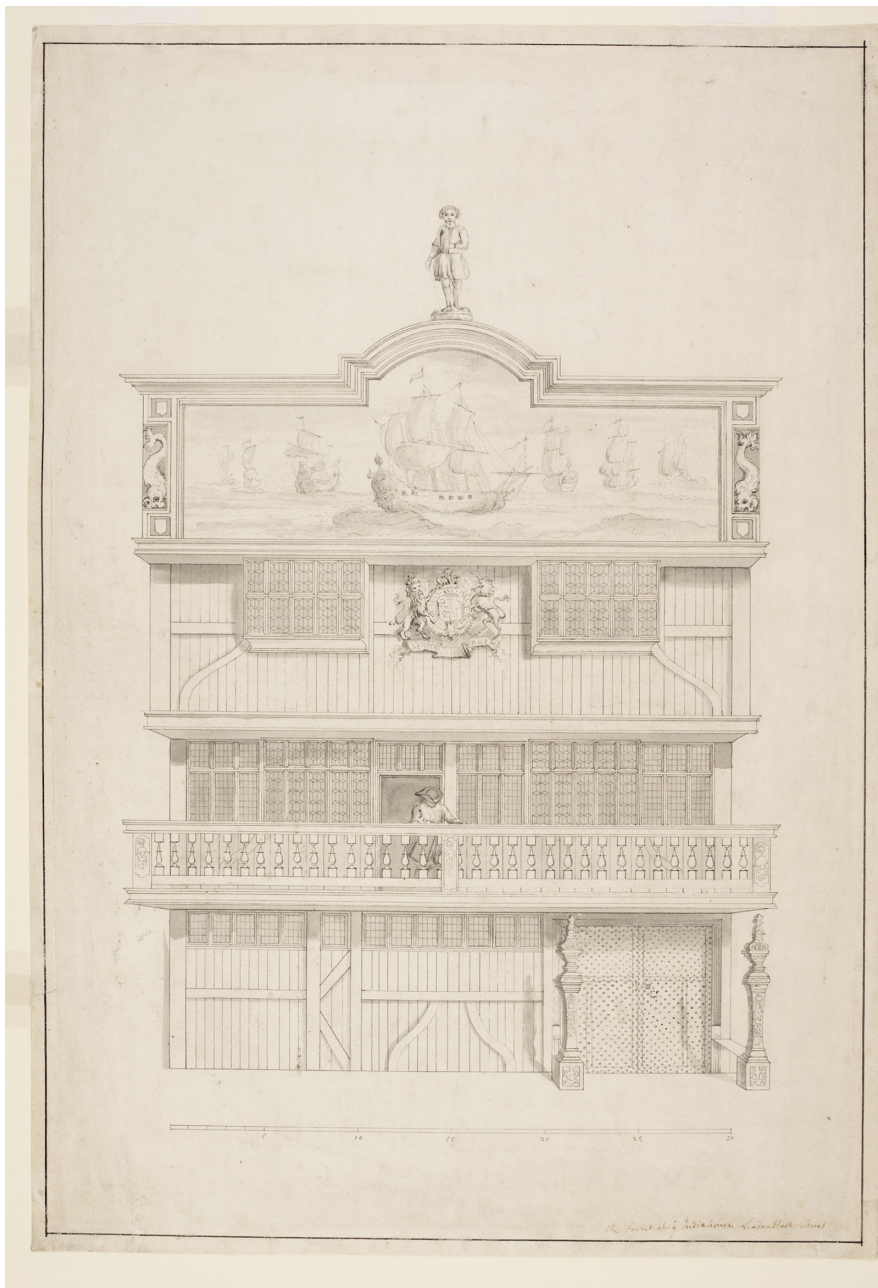


Figure 1.7. Façade of Craven House by George Vertue, c.1711. British Library, WD1341. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



Helena, a rocky island that became a key stopping point for ships travelling across the Atlantic.<sup>70</sup>

In the early eighteenth century, two events significantly changed the East India Company. The first of these was the formation of the United East India Company. Although the Company had fervently aligned itself with the monarchy in the 1660s, recasting itself as loyal to Charles II, circumstances changed under William III. The monarchy and Parliament took issue with the Company's charter because of the limited control it held over its operations in Asia. Its remaining factories had survived not because of the Company's support, but because the factors who ran them had overcome their abandonment in the seventeenth century. Having failed to fulfil its purpose as an English trading company, in 1697, when the Company's charter was again up for renewal, William III decided to invest in a newly created East India Company called "The Governor and Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies". Parliament ordered the "old" East India Company to close its affairs in Asia and dissolve itself.<sup>71</sup> However, the new company that was supported by William III had no networks within the economic and political structures of Asia. Only three years after its launch, the new company's shareholders and Parliament, desperate to improve their chances of success in Asia, decided to merge with the old company before it disappeared. In January 1702 the old and new companies were joined, and by 1709 the "United East India Company" was fully operational.<sup>72</sup>

The other event that changed the Company in the early eighteenth century was the concomitant Act of Union between England and Scotland in 1706–1707. Forged under the rule of William III, the most powerful assemblage of artworks to declare the importance of this event is James Thornhill's Painted Hall, next to the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. Thornhill began painting the hall's 4,000-square-metre interior in 1708, and finished it nearly 20 years later, in 1727. Painted in the baroque style, it relied on allegory to communicate key issues of early-eighteenth-century British statecraft. The most direct theme expressed in these paintings is the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism, but other themes, such as the unified rule of Britain's monarchy and recognition of Britain's maritime strength, are also symbolised in the paintings, and were described in a pamphlet authored by Thornhill.<sup>73</sup>

An early drawing of the hall's central ceiling oval, signed and dated by Thornhill in 1706–7, shows that his grand composition celebrated the unification of England and Scotland in the very same year that the Act of Union was passed.<sup>74</sup> This moment was further cemented in Thornhill's painting of Britannia, the earliest known image of her personification in British art, on the Painted Hall's upper south wall. Britannia is shown striding towards William of Orange, welcoming him to Britain as King William III in 1689, alongside her companions, "Reason of State, and Love of her Country".<sup>75</sup> The scene visualises the unity of England, Scotland, and Ireland, into a single territory under the new king's rule. The British state's maritime strength is represented by four paintings on the coving surrounding the central ceiling oval, which show Europe, Asia, Africa, and America personified as women.<sup>76</sup> Thornhill wrote in his pamphlet, and on a fictive tablet above a door on the south side of the hall, that Sir Josiah Child, who died in 1699, was one of the hall's main benefactors.<sup>77</sup> Child was also an important man within the East India Company in the seventeenth century who bridged the Cromwellian period, serving the Company under both Charles I and Charles II. His



*Figure 1.8.* Britannia welcoming William of Orange at Torbay by James Thornhill, 1706/7. South upper wall, Painted Hall, Greenwich. Photograph by the author.

inclusion in Thornhill's list of benefactors, long after his death, suggests it was important to connect the old East India Company of the seventeenth century with the new, state-backed United Company of the early eighteenth century.

After the Act of Union and the merging of the old and new companies, the East India Company's fortunes increased, allowing it to buy properties on Leadenhall Street and Lime Street. The first of these was the purchase of Craven House in 1710.<sup>78</sup> Adjacent properties were then bought for use as warehouses or were rented to their existing occupants. The first of these adjacent purchases, made in June 1712, was two houses and "some tenements" beside Craven House.<sup>79</sup> Minor renovations led to the construction of a new room "over the Transfer Office", measuring twenty-five by ten and a half feet, for the storage of "Indian books".<sup>80</sup> The only object acquired at that time was a large wall clock with an enamelled dial. It was commissioned in 1714 and might be the last extant object to be introduced inside Craven House.<sup>81</sup> It marks a moment in the East India Company's history when its operations increasingly depended on the employment of reliable clerical and secretarial staff in London. Writing and accounting were crucial technologies that underpinned the Company's global trade. The implementation of a controlled system of writing and calculation, performed by a dependable workforce in London, was necessary to control the Company's communications with its factories in Asia.<sup>82</sup> Large clocks like these were important in busy offices, suggesting that Craven House was a bustling workplace filled with staff who were required to be punctual. The clock, measuring 150 centimetres tall and 90 centimetres wide, has a door in front of its pendulum case painted with an East Indiaman ship. There is no record of where it was located inside Craven House, but no doubt, it was positioned to assist staff with timekeeping. It remained an important feature within East India House, and in 1800, was in the Marine Department. In the late nineteenth century, after East India House was demolished, it went into the India Office's Treasury in Whitehall.<sup>83</sup> Clocks like these are often called "Parliament Clocks" because of the tax imposed on them in 1797, under Prime Minister William Pitt. However, this clock was made almost 70 years before the tax existed.

### Jacobsen's East India House

When James Thornhill began working on the Painted Hall at Greenwich, the East India Company was still headquartered in Craven House, the wood-framed structure decorated with paintings of ships that Samuel Pepys described in 1661. By the time the Painted Hall was completed, Craven House was demolished and a new East India House was under construction. The exterior of Craven House had successfully aligned the Company with the monarchy in the 1660s, but the new United Company required a more modern building. Now under state protection, the East India Company commissioned a new headquarters on Leadenhall Street that would exude its heightened status as a national, state-backed enterprise. The properties the Company acquired around Leadenhall Street connected into a sizeable plot for the new building.<sup>84</sup> In December 1725 it temporarily relocated to a building on Fenchurch Street while Craven House was demolished.<sup>85</sup> The architect and merchant, Theodor Jacobsen (d.1772), began constructing the Company's new headquarters in 1726 and by June 1729, the building's exterior was complete.<sup>86</sup> Unlike the fantastic timber-frame ornamentation of

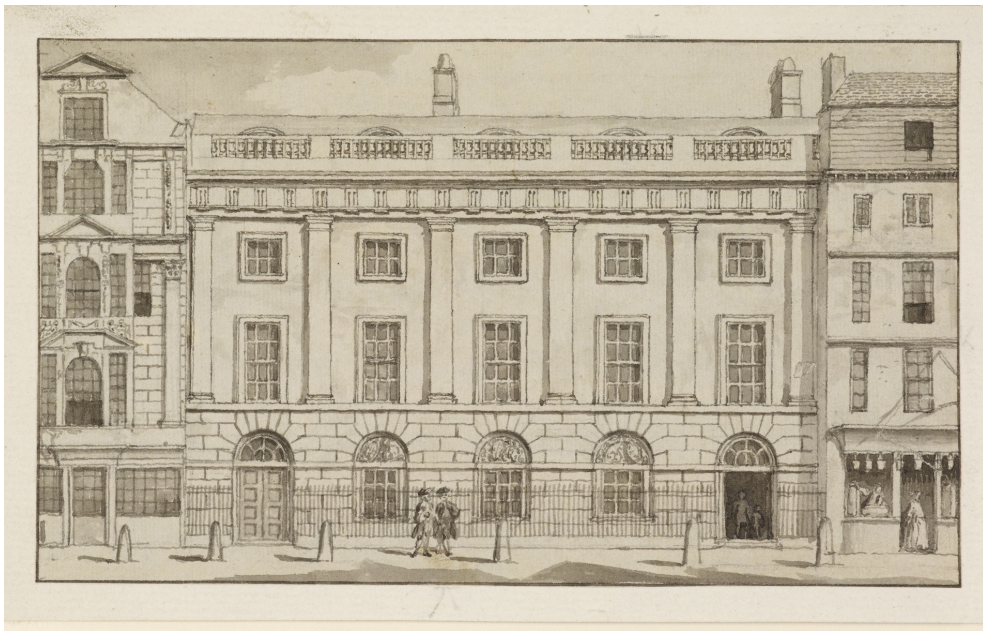




*Figure 1.9.* Wall clock, 1714. British Library, Foster 912. Photograph by the author.

Craven House, Jacobsen's East India House had a sparse, elegant stone exterior. The new building's ornamentation was on the inside, featuring a carefully proportioned Directors' Court Room in "an exact cube of 30 feet ... ornamented by gilding and by large looking-glasses ... [with] windows near the ceiling".<sup>87</sup> One can imagine that, in certain light conditions, the perfectly symmetrical Directors' Court Room, with its gilding, mirrors, and windows, was like an optical illusion that expanded into infinity. Its furniture, fittings, and wall decorations were all commissioned in the 1730s, according to Jacobsen's instructions, literally reflecting the Company's new eighteenth-century image as wealthy, rational, and modern.

The focal point of the Directors' Court Room was a sculpted marble mantelpiece by John Michael Rysbrack (1694–1770), one of the most prestigious sculptors in Britain at that time. It is a rectangular allegorical scene representing Britain's commercial wealth. The seated figure on the left is Britannia, and the three women who approach her on the right represent the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. A camel stands next to the Middle East, a lion accompanies Africa, and India is shown offering a chest overflowing with riches. To the right of the three women is Old Man Thames, resting supinely along the composition's lower edge. Behind him is a dockworker, naked from the waist up, handling a bale of goods. Above the worker there are two ships, connecting the activities on London's docklands with the places where Britain traded, as personified by the three women. Rysbrack was paid £100 for the sculpture on 22 April 1730.<sup>88</sup> It was installed above the fireplace in the new Directors' Court Room, mere



*Figure 1.10.* Façade of Theodor Jacobsen's East India House by Samuel Wale, c.1760s. British Library, WD2056. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 1.11.* The Directors' Court Room of East India House, designed by Theodor Jacobsen. Watercolour by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, c.1820. British Library, WD2465. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

weeks before the building was completed, in June 1730, making it the first artwork to be installed inside Jacobsen's East India House.

Rysbrack's chimneypiece was the first marble sculpture to be commissioned by the Company, expressing in stone its connection with the British state inside the most exclusive room of East India House. In a single composition, with Britannia as its focus, the Company's foundation was represented as standing within a new, united, secure Britain. The sources of the Company's wealth were the personified trade nations who supplicated themselves before Britannia. The stevedore on the right represented the Company's labouring workforce in London, who were employed just down the road, in its warehouses and docklands. The Company's purpose, to bring wealth to Britain, was clearly spelled out by this marble composition in the Directors' Court Room.

The inspiration for John Michael Rysbrack's relief of Britannia came from James Thornhill's painted hall in Greenwich. When Rysbrack received the sculpture commission, James Thornhill (1675–1734) had just finished his monumental painting project. It is likely that several figures in Thornhill's Painted Hall were Rysbrack's models. The Painted Hall and East India House held the two earliest representations of Britannia in



*Figure 1.12.* Britannia presented with riches from the East. Marble overmantle by John Michael Rysbrack, 1729–30. British Library, Foster 8. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

British art.<sup>89</sup> Just like Thornhill, Rysbrack made Britannia into a welcoming, unifying figure who greets the three trade nations. Personifying them all as women is another feature shared between Thornhill's paintings and Rysbrack's sculpted mantelpiece. Thornhill painted the same personified continents, showing Africa with a lion at her side, wearing the skin from an elephant's head, while the Middle East wears a turban and is accompanied by a camel.<sup>90</sup> In the Rysbrack sculpture, the Middle East is also accompanied by a camel, while Africa, with a lion, wears the same headgear from the skin of an elephant's tusked head. Today, Thornhill's work remains the largest allegorical painting scheme in Britain. It was the obvious design source for Rysbrack's marble relief.

In 1730, the same year that Rysbrack's sculpture was installed inside the Directors' Court Room, the Company commissioned George Lambert (1700–65) and Samuel Scott (1701/2–1772) to paint six seascapes of its coastal settlements at Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Tellicherry, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Island of St Helena. George Lambert painted the coastal landscapes in the background, and Samuel Scott painted the ships in the foreground. Both men had never travelled to any of the places represented in the paintings. The ships would have been relatively simple to paint because the Thames docklands were visited by every type of ship imaginable. George Lambert's contribution, showing the six different settlements as backgrounds, was

more challenging and would have relied on a range of sources, possibly supplied by the Company, of “country house”-style landscapes for him to copy.<sup>91</sup> Lambert might have also relied on written descriptions and interviews with men in London who had travelled to these places aboard the Company’s ships. The seascapes of Bombay, Fort St George Madras, and Fort William Calcutta emphasise the presence of European ships and buildings, relying on skylines of church spires, warehouse buildings and fortifications.<sup>92</sup> The other three seascapes make use of natural features. St Helena’s rocky shoreline, the unmistakable shape of the Cape’s Table Mountain, and the green Malabar Hills behind Tellicherry are these paintings’ key identifiers. Unlike the landscape paintings of India that would follow later in the eighteenth century, Lambert and Scott didn’t add exoticised foreign elements to help identify locations.

The Lambert and Scott seascapes were the first oil paintings to be commissioned by the East India Company in the eighteenth century. Over a hundred years had passed since the Company commissioned Richard Greenbury to paint the Amboyna Massacre and the portrait of Naqd Ali Beg. The seventeenth-century paintings, especially in hindsight, reflected the Company’s chaotic beginnings. By contrast, the Lambert and Scott seascapes from the 1730s give a stable reading of the Company’s business, binding these distant places into the carefully curated, ultra-rational Directors’ Court Room in London. A single cube-shaped room within East India House conjured the Company’s role within Britain whilst visualising the geographical range of its trade. Whilst ironic that the seascapes were not factual, to a London audience they were symbolic through



*Figure 1.13.* Seascape of Bombay by George Lambert and Samuel Scott, c.1731. British Library, Foster 48. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 1.14.* Seascape of Fort St George, Madras by George Lambert and Samuel Scott, c.1731. British Library, Foster 46. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 1.15.* Seascape of Fort William, Calcutta by George Lambert and Samuel Scott, c.1731. British Library, Foster 45. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 1.16.* The Island of St Helena by George Lambert and Samuel Scott, c.1731. British Library, Foster 37. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 1.17.* The Cape of Good Hope by George Lambert and Samuel Scott, c.1731. British Library, Foster 35. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 1.18.* Tellicherry, Kerala by George Lambert and Samuel Scott, c.1731. British Library, Foster 40. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

their depiction of European ships alongside buildings and fortifications in faraway places. The paintings were commissioned at a time when Parliament was challenging the Company's affairs, which included the Directors' decision to construct forts at its overseas trading posts, so the buildings in the background projected decisiveness and corporate strength.<sup>93</sup> The six seascapes also show changes to the Company's geographical range. None of the paintings are of settlements in the "Spice Islands", nor do they show the factories at Surat and Machilipatnam that had been important in the seventeenth century.

A suite of furniture was also commissioned for the Directors' Court Room, featuring an ornate throne for the East India Company's Chairman.<sup>94</sup> Carved from walnut and upholstered with crimson velvet, this five-foot-tall chair is richly decorated with maritime symbols. The legs taper into the shapes of dolphins, and the top of the backrest is carved into a crowned face of Neptune. There is an embroidered picture of the East India Company's coat of arms on its crimson velvet backrest. The Chairman of the East India Company would have sat upon this throne while presiding over meetings in the Directors' Court Room. Other furniture was made, but this chair was the most emblematic piece of furniture for the new room.

The other significant object inside Theodor Jacobsen's carefully curated Directors' Court Room was the coat of arms of the United East India Company that hung on the



*Figure 1.19.* The East India Company Chairman's Chair, c.1730. British Library, Foster 905.  
Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 1.20.* Coat of Arms of the United East India Company, c.1730. British Library, Foster 887. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

wall.<sup>95</sup> Its presence drew together the room's symbolically charged décor, as shown in the sculpted mantle of Britannia and the seascapes by Lambert and Scott, presenting the Company as part of the British state. The positioning of all these objects was documented in a small watercolour painting dated 1820, by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd. [Figure 1.11] The Chairman's Chair, the coat of arms, and four of the six seascapes by Lambert and Scott are all visible in the picture, as well as some of the room's large gilt mirrors.<sup>96</sup> It is impossible to say whether the Directors' Court Room in 1820 looked the same as it did in the 1730s, but it certainly contained all the artworks that Theodor Jacobsen placed inside of it. One way to discern how the Directors' Court Room originally looked is to examine another room he designed. Another of Jacobsen's commissions was the court room of the Thomas Coram Foundation at Brunswick Square in London. It was constructed and decorated soon after East India House's completion, as part of London's Foundling Hospital in the 1740s. The Foundling Hospital was demolished in the 1920s, but the Thomas Coram Foundation meticulously preserved its court room by replicating the space inside its new headquarters. It shares many



similarities with the East India Company's Directors' Court Room, such as a marble chimneypiece sculpted by Rysbrack and a matching set of specially commissioned oil paintings that thematically reveal the organisation's idealised function. Both the Directors' Court Room of East India House and the Foundling Hospital's court room were decorated to convey "institutional respectability", aimed at attracting wealthy, virtuous representatives.<sup>97</sup>

The Directors' Court Room of Jacobsen's East India House was not furnished with any of the goods the Company imported. There was a complete absence of wallpaper, porcelain, textiles, lacquer work, or any of the other fashionable goods that it made its money from. Such luxury goods, which were displayed inside wealthy British households, were absent from the very room the Company's directors met. According to Mildred Archer, it was

as if the Directors shrank from appearing even obliquely "Chinese" or "Indian" in their way of life, and, for all the Eastern products incorporated in their office and its furnishings, their dealings might as well have been with North American Indians.<sup>98</sup>

If the directors were interested in the goods the Company imported to London, there was a doorway on the north side of the Directors' Court Room that led into the General Court Room, where its imports were sold by auction.<sup>99</sup> The doorway separated the ordered, rational space of the directors from the clamour and chaos of its mercantile function.

### John Dean's story: What really happened?

The final commissioned artworks considered here, from the early 1740s, are a reminder of the chaotic conditions that still prevailed within the East India Company. They are a pair of portraits by Willem Verelst of John Dean, the sole survivor of a shipwrecked East Indiaman named the *Sussex*.<sup>100</sup> They were made at a pivotal point in the Company's history and stand out as completely unique from its other commissions, both before the 1740s, and afterwards. In March 1738, the *Sussex* was shipwrecked off the coast of Madagascar with John Dean on board. It took Dean three years to find his way back to London. The first 16 months of his ordeal were spent walking through Madagascar in search of a place where European ships might drop anchor. An account of his journey, beginning with the *Sussex*'s shipwreck and ending with his rescue from Madagascar,<sup>101</sup> was conveyed to London, transcribed by the East India Company, and published in 1740.<sup>102</sup> With the success of books such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), John Dean's true story became popular. In 1743, the same year that the Verelst portraits were made, the Company awarded Dean a generous pension of 100 pounds a year, and an annuity worth half that amount to his wife, should she outlive him.<sup>103</sup> In 1744 he was appointed an Elder Porter at the East India Company's Drug Warehouse,<sup>104</sup> and in December 1747 he died, probably when he was in his early 40s.<sup>105</sup>

There are three things about the Dean portraits that make them unique. First is the Company's decision to commission Willem Verelst to paint not one, nor two, but three portraits of Dean on 16 June 1743.<sup>106</sup> There were moments in the Company's history when it commissioned two portraits of the same person by the same artist,<sup>107</sup> but never before and never again would the Company commission three identical portraits at once. The next curious thing is that one of the paintings has a detailed inscription along the bottom of the canvas reading, "John Dean, the Only Survivor of the Sixteen Men which remained on board the Ship *Sussex* in the Honble East India Company's Service".<sup>108</sup> No other portraits commissioned by the East India Company bear inscriptions like this, and its presence, written in a font resembling a typeset, suggests that the viewer was invited to connect Dean's image with the published story of his ordeal. The third unique feature is its subject matter. Unlike other East India Company portraits, which show kings, diplomats, politicians, and military heroes, John Dean was a low-ranking sailor.

In Verelst's portraits, John Dean looks healthy and cheerful. He is dressed in new clothes made from coarse grey cloth that befit his status as a financially secure, working-class man. He stands in front of a stone building surrounded by an iron gate resembling the exterior of Theodor Jacobsen's East India House. He holds what looks like a letter of appointment in his right hand, and in his left hand he holds a walking stick and a new hat. If one takes the portraits of John Dean, and the Company's publication about his shipwreck, as honest historical documents, then his story of survival has a happy ending, with him living the remainder of his life in comfort, thanks to his employer's generosity. If one doubts the honesty of these documents, then the portraits show how important it was for the East India Company to control John Dean's story, which represented its version of the circumstances behind the *Sussex*'s shipwreck in 1738.

When men such as Dean, with narratives of "trauma, endurance and survival", made it back to Britain, it was normal for them to be "ordered to tell something of their story more widely by authority figures of some kind: employers, law officers, courts martial, churchmen or politicians".<sup>109</sup> The portraits of Dean connected with the published account of the shipwreck, which was used in a court of law by the East India Company to destroy Francis Gostling, the captain of the *Sussex*. Gostling reached London in the summer of 1738, about four months after the shipwreck, and conveyed his version of events to the East India Company's Court of Directors in July and August of that year.<sup>110</sup> According to Gostling, the *Sussex* was irreparably damaged, so when another ship called the *Winchester* came to its aid on 11 March 1738, he gave orders for his crew to abandon the *Sussex*. Gostling also claimed that the *Winchester*'s assistance came too late to save the *Sussex*'s cargo and the lives of 16 men. The East India Company's directors had no way of disproving Captain Gostling's version of events. On 18 August 1738 the Company's Committee of Shipping reported that the crew of the *Sussex* that had escaped death, along with the crew of the *Winchester*, "had done their duty upon the occasion of quitting the *Sussex* and suffering the *Sussex* to go away from the *Winchester*".<sup>111</sup> At a meeting of the Court of Proprietors, it was resolved, without any objections, that Gostling, along with Captain Dove, the commander of the *Winchester*, should be permanently banned from serving the East India



Figure 1.21. Portrait of John Dean by Willem Verelst, 1743. British Library, Foster 19.  
Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Company as punishment for not saving the lives of the 16 men who went down with the *Sussex*.<sup>112</sup>

Gostling's punishment would have ended there, had it not been for John Dean's unexpected survival. On 17 September 1740, news reached the Court of Directors in London that "John Deane, one of the crew of the *Sussex*" was alive, and having been transported from Madagascar to Bombay, was awaiting a ship back to London. This news was accompanied by "his narrative and examination dated at Bombay [on] 5<sup>th</sup> December 1739".<sup>113</sup> Two days after Dean's account was read to the Court of Directors, the Company's Committee of Lawsuits recommended that "a Bill be filed at Chancery against the Captain of the *Sussex*".<sup>114</sup> Dean's story gave the East India Company a valuable alternative version to Gostling's account of the shipwreck. A 22-page booklet, written in the third person, was published in 1740, within three months of news of Dean's survival reaching the Court of Directors. By the time Dean finally reached London in September 1741,<sup>115</sup> the booklet, giving the East India Company's account of Dean's story, had received two print runs<sup>116</sup> under the descriptive title:

A True and Genuine Narrative of the whole affair relating to the Ship *Sussex* as sent to the Directors of the Honourable East India Company; From the Time she was deserted by the Officers, and greatest part of the Crew, till she was unfortunately wreck'd on the Bassas De India ... By John Dean, The only surviving person of them all.

The handwritten manuscript that the printed account was based on, also written in the third person, was purportedly the true account of John Dean, and was signed by 13 of the men on board the *Prince William*, the ship that rescued Dean from Madagascar, as witnesses.<sup>117</sup>

The booklet's account of the *Sussex*'s abandonment claimed that Captain Gostling and the others who boarded the *Winchester* pillaged the *Sussex*'s cargo. The 16 men who were left on board determined that the ship was still seaworthy and intended to bring the *Sussex*, with its cargo, to the nearest port for repairs. Dean's account claimed that after plundering the *Sussex*, Gostling gave orders for the ship's lifeboat and fore-sail to be cut free and sent a carpenter to wilfully damage the hull.<sup>118</sup> Gostling's actions in the published account accused him of not just abandoning his ship and stealing its cargo, but also of sabotaging the *Sussex* to ensure that the 16 witnesses of his treachery would die.<sup>119</sup> Armed with John Dean, who was ordered to verify the published account, the East India Company filed a lawsuit against Francis Gostling to gain compensation for the *Sussex*'s lost cargo. At London's Guild Hall on 1 November 1742, John Dean stood as the Company's only material witness to testify against Gostling, who was ordered to compensate the Company £30,202. A second trial was granted at the King's Bench in May 1743, and Gostling was at that time ordered to pay the Company the revised sum of £25,000.<sup>120</sup> Dean's testimony was based on the account that the East India Company had published in 1740, a year before he reached Britain.

After the Company won its case against Gostling in May 1743, Willem Verelst was commissioned to paint the three portraits and Dean was granted his generous pension.<sup>121</sup> The Company's Court Minutes tell us that, on 16 June 1743 it was "Order'd that a Warrant be made out to Mr. William Verelst for Fifty Guineas for painting two



originals and one copy of John Deane late belonging to the Ship Sussex and that one of the original pictures be delivered to th ... ".<sup>122</sup> The passage's final sentence was never completed, so the recipient of the third portrait is unknown. It has been suggested that one of the paintings was presented to Dean,<sup>123</sup> although it seems doubtful that a working-class man, even after receiving the East India Company's favour, would live in a home that could accommodate a five-foot-tall portrait. One of the paintings was installed inside East India House,<sup>124</sup> and the other was placed into storage.<sup>125</sup>

Before the Company commissioned Willem Verelst to paint the portrait, a mezzotint of John Dean, based on an earlier painting by Verelst, had been circulated. This earlier portrait was probably a private business venture in response to the popularity of Dean's published story from 1740. The mezzotint was widely distributed, and while numerous examples of it have survived, the painting it was based on is now missing. It theatrically shows Dean standing bare-chested and holding a spear, dressed in the ragged remains of his trousers. Behind him there is a ship crashing into a wild shoreline. This image most likely prompted the East India Company to commission the same artist to produce the three portraits of the fully clothed, respectable John Dean. The published story in 1740 and the mezzotint showing a semi-naked man had made Dean famous and informed the directors' opportunistic decision to commission the portraits, recasting him as a loyal East India Company servant in London. One of the 1743 portraits by Verelst bears the same inscription along the bottom of the canvas that appears on the mezzotint, making the connection between the portraits of clothed and shipwrecked Dean undeniable. Perhaps the Company wanted the portrait of the respectably attired Dean to be made into a mezzotint as well.

The East India Company used John Dean's story to ruin Francis Gostling and to promote its image as a benevolent employer of workers in its docklands and warehouses. The Company forced through its version of events to enhance its public image and to extract the disgraced captain's fortune. All of this happened a decade after the East India Company had commissioned a new suite of artworks for East India House's Directors' Court Room. The veneer of respectability conveyed in the 1730s commissions, followed by the portraits of Dean, suggests that treachery and manipulation were still at the Company's foundation. The directors, ensconced in their genteel surroundings, were capable of abject manipulation and cruelty.

The East India Company's early artworks show the dark, fickle side of its history. The narratives they expose were scripted to help create and control official accounts of events. The Company also used art to declare shifting support for new causes. When England's monarchy was restored in 1660, the Company proclaimed its loyalty to Charles II through art. Likewise, when Theodor Jacobsen's East India House was constructed, the Directors' Court Room was decorated to project it as a rational, unified, financially stable institution in the City of London that rivalled the size and strength of its competitors.<sup>126</sup> By the late 1740s the Company had established a private army that would change South Asia's political landscape.

Most research on the East India Company's artworks present the décor of Theodor Jacobsen's Directors' Court Room as a starting point. However, these items, commissioned in the early 1730s, can also be seen as the culmination of events that started over a century earlier, all of which predated the Company's imperial ambitions. The earliest extant painting that the Company commissioned, the portrait of Naqđ Ali



Figure 1.22. Mezzotint of John Dean on a rocky shoreline by Johan Faber, after Willem Verelst, c.1743. British Library, P553. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Beg, was displayed inside three other buildings before it was placed inside Jacobsen's East India House. Its survival into the eighteenth century was possible because the East India Company always had somewhere to keep it. Its continuous habitation of places of business in the City of London from the early seventeenth century onwards made the Company unique. The construction of East India House on Leadenhall Street facilitated the continued growth of a remarkable corporately gathered art collection into the mid-nineteenth century.

## Notes

- 1 Crosby House is today at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea and is a private residence.
- 2 John A. Harris, *A Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels: Consisting of Above Six Hundred of the Most Authentic Writers* (London: T. Woodward, 1744), vol 1, section XXXIII, 874.
- 3 Harris, *A Complete Collection of Voyages*, Vol 1, XXXIII, 875–6.
- 4 Margaret Makepeace *The East India Company's London Workers: Management of the Warehouse Labourers, 1800–1858* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 2.
- 5 Jennifer Scarce, "Safavid Dress and Europe", in *The Fascination of Persia*, ed. Axel Langer (Zurich: Verlag, Scheiddeger & Spiess, 2013), 58–77.
- 6 Anthony Farrington, *Trading Places: The East India Company and Asia 1600–1834* (London: British Library, 2002), 48.
- 7 David Veevers, *The Origins of the British Empire in Asia, 1600–1750* (Cambridge: UP, 2020), 38–39.
- 8 Rupali Mishra, *A Business of State: Commerce, Politics and the Birth of the East India Company* (Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2018), 20–21.
- 9 Mishra, *A Business of State*, 19.
- 10 Thomas Smythe was also a member of the Levant and Muscovy Companies. Portraits of him and 13 members of his family by Cornelius Kettel, painted in around 1600, are in Skinners Hall, London. They are the earliest known portraits of a non-nobility family in Britain.
- 11 Mortimer Epstein, *The Early History of the Levant Company* (London: Routledge, 1908), 103.
- 12 Epstein, *The Early History*, 103–104, note 19.
- 13 Veevers, *The Origins*, 42.
- 14 Farrington, *Trading Places*, 51.
- 15 Courts of Committees Minutes, September 1623 and 20 October 1623, BL, IOR/B/8, 137, 199.
- 16 Court of Committees Minutes, 7 January 1624. BL, IOR/B/8, 343–344.
- 17 East India Company, *A True Relation of the Unjust, Cruell and Barbarous Proceedings against the English at Amboyna* (London: Nathaniel Newberry, 1624), frontispiece (BL, T39928).
- 18 Court of Committees Minutes, 20 August 1624. BL, IOR/B/9, 80.
- 19 Court of Committees Minutes on 5 May, 31 May and 22 July 1624. BL, IOR/B/8, 510, 542; IOR/B/9, 30–33.
- 20 BL, IOR/B/9, ff.149, 177, 178.
- 21 East India Company, *The English at Amboyna*. Republished in Harris, *A Complete Collection of Voyages*, 1744, vol 1, XXXIII, 878–81.
- 22 East India Company, *The English at Amboyna*, frontispiece.
- 23 Alison Games, *Inventing the English Massacre* (Oxford: UP, 2020), 107–108.
- 24 Courts of Committees Minutes, 10 December 1624. BL, IOR/B/9, 251.
- 25 Courts of Committees Minutes, 16 February and 18 February 1625. BL, IOR/B/9, 345–346.
- 26 Games, *Inventing the Massacre*, 108.
- 27 William Foster, *John Company* (London: John Bodley, 1926), 44–45.

- 28 Courts of Committees Minutes, 28 February 1625. BL, IOR/B/9, 359; Letter from William Foster to Mr. Woolaston, 7 November, 1903. BL, IOR/L/R/6/248, file 1532.
- 29 Guido Rebecchini, "Charles I's Visit to Madrid", in *Charles I: King and Collector* (London: Royal Academy, 2018), 50.
- 30 Courts of Committees Minutes, 18 April 1625. BL, IOR/B/9, 418.
- 31 Courts of Committees Minutes, 6 May 1625. BL, IOR/B/10, 26.
- 32 Courts of Committees Minutes, 28 April 1626. BL, IOR/B/10, f.388.
- 33 Courts of Committees Minutes, February 1626. BL, IOR/B/10, f.261 and 262.
- 34 BL, Foster 23.
- 35 Axel Langer, *The Fascination of Persia* (Zurich: Verlag Scheiddeger & Spiess, 2013), 26–29.
- 36 Courts of Committees Minutes, 13 August 162. BL, IOR/B/9, 70.
- 37 For two entries on Shirley and Amboyna on the same page, see Courts of Committees Minutes, 10 January 1625 and 20 March 1625. BL, IOR/B/9, 295–296 and 381.
- 38 William Foster's notes, 7 November 1903. BL, IOR/L/R/6/248, file 1532/1903.
- 39 Dennis Wright, *The Persians amongst the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History* (London: Tauris, 1985), 5–7.
- 40 Courts of Committees Minutes, 28 February 1627, BL, IOR/B/11; William Foster's notes, 7 November 1903, BL, IOR/L/R/6/248, file 1532/1903.
- 41 Thomas Herbert, *A Relation of Some Yeares Travaile, Begunne Anno 1626* (London: Stansby and Bloome, 1634), 27–8.
- 42 Herbert, *Some Yeares Travaile*, 28.
- 43 Anonymous, "Account of the Origin of the East India Company", *European Magazine*, April 1803, 246–248.
- 44 Mildred Archer, *The India Office Collection of Painting and Sculpture* (London: British Library, 1986), 8.
- 45 Paulina Banas, "Persian Art and The Crafting of Polish Identity", in *The Fascination of Persia*, ed. Axel Langer (Zurich: Verlag, Scheiddeger & Spiess, 2013), 123.
- 46 Banas, "Persian Art", 128–30, 132.
- 47 Courts of Committees Minutes, 29 January 1619. BL, IOR/B/6.
- 48 Quoted from Archer, *The India Office Collection*, 9; Courts of Committees Minutes, 1630. BL, IOR/B/14.
- 49 Archer, *The India Office Collection*, 8–9.
- 50 Archer, *The India Office Collection*, p.8.
- 51 Drawings by Roelant Savery, 1604 and 1618, British Museum, P&D, No.1856-0712-22 and 1856-0712-23. In M Paszkiewicz, *Muzeum Polskie* (London: 1973–1975), vol 5, 1975, 243–4.
- 52 Birgitte Borkopp-Restle, "Persian and Polish Sashes: Symbols of National Identity and Luxury Textiles in an International Market", in *The Fascination of Persia*, ed. Axel Langer (Zurich: Verlag, Scheiddeger & Spiess, 2013), 137.
- 53 Banas, "Persian Art", 122–123.
- 54 William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London: John Lane, 1924), 2.
- 55 Court Minutes, 14 September 1642, BL, IOR/B/20, 202.
- 56 Court Minutes, 24 May 1644, BL, IOR/B/21, 168.
- 57 Veevers, *The Origins*, 51.
- 58 Richard Hudson, 27 September 1639. BL, APAC, IOR/G/40/9. Quoted from Veevers, *The Origins*, 51.
- 59 Foster, *The East India House*, 17–18.
- 60 George Birdwood, *Relics of the Honourable East India Company* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1909), 55–56.
- 61 Poplar, near the old East India Docks.
- 62 William Pettigrew and Edmond Smith, "Corporate Management, Labour Relations and Community Building at the East India Company's Blackwall Dockyard, 1600–1657". *Journal of Social History* 53, no.1 (2019): 133–156.



- 63 John Ogilby, *The Entertainment of His Most Excellent Majestie Charles II, in His Passage through the City of London to his Coronation* (London: Mariot and Dring, 1662), 13.
- 64 “Sovereign of the Seas” was completed in 1637 under Charles I, and was in use throughout the seventeenth century, even under Cromwell. Michael Snodin and John Styles, *Design and Decorative Arts: Britain 1500–1900* (London: V&A Publications, 2001), 150–153.
- 65 Ogilby, *The Entertainment*, 101–103.
- 66 Ogilby, *The Entertainment*, 103.
- 67 There are three pictures of Craven House in the British Library; WD 1341, P2174, and P2167.
- 68 Quotation from March 1661 in Foster, *The East India House*, 41.
- 69 Charters of the East India Company, Letters Patent of Charles II, BL, IOR/A/33, 35, 36, 37, 38.
- 70 Charters of the East India Company, Letters Patent of Charles II, BL, IOR/A/22, 26, 30, 34.
- 71 Veevers, *The Origins*, 168.
- 72 Veevers, *The Origins*, 172–173.
- 73 James Thornhill, *An Explanation of the Painting in the Royal Hospital at Greenwich* (London: 1730?).
- 74 Thornhill’s signed design for the central oval, 6 March 1706–7. BM 1880,0726.40.66 (folio 66v in sketchbook 1884,0726.40.1-147).
- 75 Thornhill, *An Explanation*, 14.
- 76 Thornhill’s studies for the coving paintings, dated 1717 – BM 1865.0610.1348.
- 77 Thornhill, *An Explanation*, 3.
- 78 Foster, *The East India House*, 48.
- 79 Court Minutes, 20 June 1712. BL, IOR/B/52, 71.
- 80 Court Minutes, 27 November 1713. BL, IOR/B/52, 549.
- 81 BL, Foster 912. For its commissioning, see Minutes of the Court of Directors, 10 August 1714. BL, IOR/B/53, 104 and Birdwood, *Relics*, 57.
- 82 Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink* (Chicago: University Press, 2007), chapter 3.
- 83 Foster, *The East India House*, 53.
- 84 Foster, *The East India House*, 48–50.
- 85 Foster, *The East India House*, 130.
- 86 Jacobsen later went on to build the Foundling Hospital at Corams Field.
- 87 Platt, “The East India House”, 61.
- 88 Foster, *The East India House*, 135.
- 89 David Bindman, “Introduction to the History of British Art 1600 to 1800”, in *The History of British Art, volume 2. 1600–1870*, ed. David Bindman (London: Tate, 2008). Bindman overlooks Thornhill’s figure and identifies Rysbrack’s sculpture as the first image of Britannia.
- 90 Anya Lucas, Richard Johns, Sophie Stewart and Stephen Paine, *The Painted Hall: Sir James Thornhill’s Masterpiece at Greenwich* (London: Merrell, 2019), 140–141. For Thornhill’s sketches of the personified continents see The Greenwich Foundation, *A Great and Noble Design. Sir James Thornhill’s Painted Hall at Greenwich: A Catalogue of Preparatory Sketches* (Bristol: Hampton, 2016), 28.
- 91 Brian Allen, “The East India Company’s Settlement Pictures: George Lambert and Samuel Scott”, *Marg*, XLVI, no.4 (1995), 11.
- 92 John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain’s Global Visual Culture 1745–1820* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011), 171.
- 93 Emily Mann, “Building”, in *The Corporation as a Protagonist in Global History, c.1550–1750*, ed. William Pettigrew and David Veevers (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 219–220.
- 94 BL, Foster 905.
- 95 BL, Foster 887.
- 96 BL, WD2465
- 97 Allen, “The East India Company’s Settlement Pictures”, 10.

- 98 Mildred Archer, "The East India Company and British Art", *Apollo Magazine* 82 (November 1965), 401.
- 99 The Sales Room was also the "General Court Room".
- 100 BL, Foster 19 and 19a.
- 101 John Dean and The East India Company, *A True and Genuine Narrative of the Whole Affair Relating to the Ship Sussex as Sent to the Directors of the Honourable East India Company ... By John Dean, The Only Surviving Person of Them All* (London: C. Corbett, 1740). The manuscript account of Dean's journey, told in the third person, is in the British Library, Mss Eur B2.
- 102 For an abridged account see William Foster, "The Wreck of the Sussex Indiaman", *The Indian Magazine and Review* 270 (June 1893): 276–284. Also see Farrington, *Trading Places*, 30–31; Archer, *The India Office Collection*, 45.
- 103 Court Minutes, 16 November 1743. BL, IOR/B/67, 449.
- 104 Court Minutes, Friday 15 March, 1744. BL, IOR/B/68, 243.
- 105 Dean's year of birth is given as 1716 in S.L. Middleton, *John Dean: Only Survivor of the Ship Sussex* (Great Britain: FeedaRead.com Publishing, 2013), 13.
- 106 Court Minutes, 16 June 1743. BL, IOR/B/67, 333. One portrait is missing and the other two are in the British Library, Foster 19 and 19a.
- 107 Richard Greenbury was commissioned to paint two portraits of Naqd Ali Beg in 1626. Thomas Banks was commissioned to make two sculptures of Eyre Coote in 1784.
- 108 The text is painted onto Foster 19, but not Foster 19a.
- 109 Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850* (London: Random House, 2003), 75.
- 110 Court Minutes, 18 August 1738. BL, IOR/B/65, 107.
- 111 Court Minutes, 18 August 1738. BL, IOR/B/65, 107.
- 112 Court Minutes, 30 March 1739. BL, IOR/B/65, 311.
- 113 Court Minutes, 17 September 1740. BL, IOR/B/66, 84.
- 114 Court Minutes, 19 September 1740. BL, IOR/B/66, 151.
- 115 His first appearance before the Court of Directors was on 2 September 1741. BL, IOR/B/66, f.366.
- 116 Two separate publishers in London published Dean's account in 1740. One was T. Cooper, and the other was C. Corbett.
- 117 BL, Mss Eur B2, 34–35.
- 118 In the manuscript, the lifeboat is called a "pinnacle". BL, Mss Eur B2, 3–7.
- 119 Foster "Wreck of the Sussex", 278.
- 120 Anon, "History of John Dean", *The Gentleman's Magazine* (July 1807), 606.
- 121 Court Minutes, November 1743. BL, IOR/B/67, 333, 449.
- 122 Court Minutes, 16 June 1743. BL, IOR/B/67, 333.
- 123 William Foster, *John Company* (London: John Lane, 1926), 208.
- 124 BL, Foster 19a
- 125 In 1807 one of Verelst's Dean portraits was "lying dormant after 18 years". Anon, "History of John Dean", 606. Foster, *John Company*, 208.
- 126 Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), 55.

## LANDSCAPE AND IMPERIALISM

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, British expansion in India was part of a global escalation of warfare. Through its trade rivalry with the French, the British became entangled in a “web of South Asian diplomacy and warfare” which led to a “shift from an empire centred around free association and exchange to one largely based on conquest and dominion”.<sup>1</sup> During this new, aggressive period of military expansion, between 1757 and 1764, a soldier named Francis Swain Ward (c.1734–1805) served in the East India Company’s Madras Army. As its military power expanded over South Asia, the Company’s headquarters inside East India House on London’s Leadenhall Street gradually filled with artworks relating to this expansion. One of its largest intakes of artworks was in 1773, when the Company purchased a set of ten landscape paintings by Francis Swain Ward showing inland locations where its armies had been in the 1750s. They were the first landscapes of India to be publicly exhibited in Britain by an artist who had travelled to South Asia. The ten paintings were placed in matching frames, and installed, as a set, inside East India House’s Committee of Correspondence Room, where influential letters were drafted for dispatch to India. Surrounded by landscapes of the places the Company had expanded into, the high-ranking men who worked in that room worked in a space decorated by proof of its private army’s actions.

This chapter is about the career of Francis Swain Ward and the paintings he sold to the East India Company in 1773. Two main contexts are examined here. The first is the military context, looking at Ward’s career as a soldier in the Madras Army, and the campaigns of the 1750s and 1760s that the paintings relate to. Owning pictures of these new territories was important to the East India Company’s image in the late eighteenth century, when Robert Orme, the Company’s historian, was codifying the history of these incursions in his writings. The second context was London’s art scene in the late 1760s and early 1770s, when Ward’s paintings were the first landscapes of India to be publicly exhibited in London by an artist who had been to the subcontinent. There were several public venues in London where contemporary artworks were exhibited. One was the Society of Artists of Great Britain, founded in 1761, which Ward joined in 1765. Another was the Royal Academy, established in 1768, which eventually overtook the Society of Artists in popularity. Despite the significance of Ward’s work, it has been consistently overlooked by art historians, who usually regard the earliest eyewitness landscapes of India to be those exhibited in the Royal Academy by William Hodges in the 1780s.<sup>2</sup> When Ward’s artistic career faltered, followed by

the disbanding of the Society of Artists in 1791, his work was eclipsed by the output of Royal Academicians like Hodges and the Daniells.

Francis Swain Ward's ten landscapes show places in India where the East India Company sent its armies in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, mainly during the Carnatic Wars. The Company's army, founded in the late 1740s, devoted its early decades in southern India to fighting the French, their main European trade rival. As their respective armies moved further inland, the Company strived to control new territories in the south in a military push known today as the Carnatic Wars. This conflict began in 1751 when the French invaded Madras and it is often viewed as an extension of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763).<sup>3</sup> The East India Company emerged victorious from the Carnatic Wars as both a trading company and a political entity. By the early 1770s, when Francis Swain Ward was publicly exhibiting his landscapes in London with the Society of Artists, these events were fresh in the minds of anyone who had travelled to, or was familiar with individuals who had been to, India. On a more general level, anyone with a stake in the political movements and conflicts in Britain at that time, particularly those favouring the extension of Britain's maritime empire, would have taken an interest in the Company's conflicts in South Asia.<sup>4</sup>

In London, curiosity about imperial expansion was palpable in the work of artists like Francis Hayman and Edward Penny, who exhibited paintings that introduced the public to people and places connected with these conquests.

The Carnatic Wars were never as popularly depicted in art as the Company's concomitant military events in Bengal. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 was emotively portrayed on canvas by several artists in London who had never left Britain. The theme of Robert Clive on the battlefield, meeting the young man who would become the next nawab of Bengal, was a popular topic which artists used to convey a shared moment of friendship between two culturally disparate young men. Their sentimental meeting in the aftermath of battle appealed to the public's emotions. One such painting was Francis Hayman's "Robert Clive receiving the Homage of the Nabob", which was displayed in London's Vauxhall Gardens in 1760. [Figure 3.1]

Unlike the work of Francis Hayman, which played upon intense moments of human interaction, Francis Swain Ward's landscapes were factual, unsentimental renderings of the places where the Company's soldiers went. The ten landscapes connected with the work of the Company's historian, Robert Orme (1728–1801), the son of an East India Company physician who began working for the Company as a teenager, in 1743. From 1754 to 1758 Orme served on the Madras Council, where he went through the East India Company's papers at Fort St George to "rectify" errors.<sup>5</sup> He left India in 1760 and published the first volume of his authoritative work, *History of Military Transactions in Hindostan*, in 1763.<sup>6</sup> He was appointed as the Company's historian in 1769 and continued writing historical accounts of its military actions on the subcontinent, publishing the second volume of his *Military Transactions* in 1778. Francis Swain Ward and Robert Orme knew each other in London,<sup>7</sup> and many of the locations in Ward's landscapes showed places that Orme wrote about in his *Military Transactions*.

From 1764 to 1773, Ward lived in London, where he worked as an artist, exhibiting and selling paintings that mainly related to his career in India. After selling the ten landscapes to the East India Company in 1773, he returned to India as a captain in

the Madras Army, where his career as an artist floundered and failed.<sup>8</sup> By the 1780s, Ward's accreditation as a member of London's Society of Artists was meaningless in comparison to membership with the Royal Academy. In the early nineteenth century Ward's ten landscapes were divided between two different parts of East India House, and their significance as a set of paintings documenting the Company's inland conquests was forgotten.

### Ward's first posting in India

The Carnatic Wars began in 1751, when the French invaded the East India Company's garrison at Tiruchirappalli, a fortress town that was strategically located at an important military crossroads. Located on the Kaveri River, which flows towards the Bay of Bengal, it was also at the junction of the main north-south and east-west roads through the Carnatic. Control over Tiruchirappalli ensured control of inland communications in southern India, making it the logical location for a military base. In 1752, Major General Stringer Lawrence, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, went to Tiruchirappalli to defend it from French troops, accompanied by a young Robert Clive. Lawrence brought with him Company troops, aided by the armies of the Nawab of Arcot, Muhammad Ali Khan. In response to this advance, the French troops retreated from Tiruchirappalli's fortress, but not wanting to relinquish control of this valuable base, they set up camps, mainly to the north of the fort, on the banks of the Kaveri River, and on the island of Srirangam. Tiruchirappalli's importance to the British during the Carnatic Wars is recalled in the first volume of Robert Orme's *History of Military Transactions in Hindostan*, and includes a plan of the fort, and three different maps of the surrounding countryside, two of which are annotated with the positions of British and French troops in the early 1750s.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that of the ten landscapes by Francis Swain Ward, four of them show Tiruchirappalli and some key sites in the surrounding countryside.

Of Ward's ten paintings, the most instantly recognisable one was the view of the Rock Fort at Tiruchirappalli.<sup>10</sup> The painting's original title in 1773 was "The back of Tritipinopoly; the procession in the fore ground shews the daily custom of carrying water to their gods, in the temple of the rock". The view is referred to as the "back" because it shows the south side of the Rock Fort that faced away from the river and the enemy French camps. The procession in the picture's foreground shows 16 Indian men and women, some carrying water pots on their heads, and others playing musical instruments. An elephant and rider to the right of the procession contextualises the painting's location. At the far left and far right of the foreground there are three British men. Two of them wear red coats, and one is dressed in dark blue. Their presence conveys Tiruchirappalli's relevance to the East India Company.

When the British retook the fort at Tiruchirappalli in 1752, the French troops moved to the north, along the banks of the Kaveri River, and onto Srirangam Island, the site of a vast Hindu temple. The French remained there until 1758, and their presence was a perpetual source of anxiety for the British. Two of Ward's paintings are views on Srirangam Island, showing where the French troops camped before 1758. The first of these was exhibited in London under the title "The grand entrance to the Pagoda of Seringham, in the East Indies"<sup>11</sup> and shows the unfinished entrance





*Figure 2.1.* The Rock Fort at Tiruchirappalli by Francis Swain Ward, 1773. British Library, Foster 24. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

gateway at the south-side of the temple complex. Because it is at the south side of the temple, this gate was closest to Tiruchirappalli's Rock Fort, and would have been heavily occupied by French troops between 1752 and 1758. The other painting of Srirangam was exhibited in 1773 under the title "The grand festival Choultry, in Syringham" and shows the famous "Horse Mandapam",<sup>12</sup> sculpted with stone figures of rampant horses and riders, inside the temple complex. Indian men in different styles of costume stand in and around the mandapam, while a single British man dressed in a tricorn hat, red coat, and white stockings stands at the front centre, facing the viewer. His addition, leaning against a cane as he pauses in front of this stone building, is a territorial statement, alluding to the removal of French troops from Srirangam Island in 1758.

The French tried to retake Tiruchirappalli on several occasions in 1753 and 1754. By controlling the river, the French cut the Company's supply route, forcing them to seek another way to obtain provisions to the south of Tiruchirappalli. This was secured through an alliance with the Tondaiman, who ruled a kingdom that was later known as Pudukkottai. Through this alliance, supplies were moved through an infamous place of banditry known as the Tondaiman's Woods without alerting the French. Grain, hay, sheep, and cattle were transported "at appointed times at the skirts of his [the Tondaiman's] woods, within six or seven miles of the camp".<sup>13</sup> From there, the Company's troops moved the supplies into the south side of the fort. Without the





*Figure 2.2.* South entrance of the Vishnu Temple at Srirangam by Francis Swain Ward, 1773. British Library, Foster 27. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 2.3.* The Horse Mandapam at Srirangam by Francis Swain Ward, 1772. British Library, Foster 30. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Tondaiman's assistance, the Company's troops would have been starved out of their location and the British defence of Tiruchirappalli would have failed.<sup>14</sup>

One of Ward's paintings shows a remarkable stone hill to the south of Tiruchirappalli. In 1773, it was exhibited in London under the title "Virra Malli, a very extraordinary rock and temple, in the Tondiman Woods".<sup>15</sup> The small temple town of Viralimalai, to the south of Tiruchirappalli, on the fringes of the Tondaiman's Woods, was where the Company's troops received supplies from the Tondaiman.<sup>16</sup> It is south-west of the fort and is shown on eighteenth-century maps made by both the British and the French.<sup>17</sup> Today, it is still the main stopping point between Pudukkottai Town and Tiruchirappalli.

The landscapes of Srirangam and Viralimalai show locations connected with the East India Company's actions at Tiruchirappalli. High-ranking East India Company officials such as Robert Clive and Stringer Lawrence knew these places because of their strategic importance during the Company's defence of the Rock Fort in the 1750s. Francis Swain Ward was stationed at Tiruchirappalli after 1758, when the French had left the area and it had become the Company's main inland barracks, but he knew about the significance of these locations, as did Robert Orme, who wrote about the importance of Srirangam Island and the Tondaiman's Woods in the first volume of his *Military Transactions*.<sup>18</sup>

Two of the Ward paintings procured by the East India Company show stone porches known as choultries. For troops marching along the dusty roads of southern



Figure 2.4. The Rock Hill and Temple at Viralimalai by Francis Swain Ward, 1773. British Library, Foster 10. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

India, these shady, open-sided structures were welcoming places to escape from the midday heat. Intended as rest stops for Hindu pilgrims, they were constructed along roads that led to important temples and were inevitably used by other people such as the Company's soldiers. One account written in the 1760s describes soldiers setting up camp at a choultry "which offered good shelter for the men and stores".<sup>19</sup> In the 1771 catalogue for the Society of Artists exhibition in London, Ward described a choultry's function as "built for the reception of travellers, common on all roads in the East".<sup>20</sup> Although the locations of the choultries are unidentified in the Society of Artists' catalogues, the hilly landscape in the background of one painting resembles the hill forts of Sajra and Gojra to the east of Vellore, where the Company's troops marched in 1761.<sup>21</sup> Ward made at least three compositions, which are now missing, of other views near Vellore. One of these, a painting titled "A view, in passing the mountains near Velure, in the East", was exhibited in London in 1771,<sup>22</sup> and the other two were drawings titled "View 25 miles South of Vellore" and "Vellore Pettah Gate".<sup>23</sup> Ward was most likely in Vellore in around 1761, when British troops were sent there to capture its fort.<sup>24</sup> The Company's actions at Vellore in 1761 and 1762 are recorded in the second volume of Robert Orme's *Military Transactions*, and there is a picture in the book of "The Forts of the Hills of Velloor" that resembles the background in Ward's landscape.<sup>25</sup> The other Ward landscape of a choultry that the Company purchased shows its subject at an angle, with a hilly landscape in the background.<sup>26</sup> There is an Indian man standing inside the choultry, dressed in white robes and a turban who is either opening or closing the lid of a trunk. He is the only person in the painting, and the conspicuous absence of soldiers suggests that this man is either packing or unpacking this travel trunk for an East India Company soldier. The painting's title identifies it as a place where East India Company troops set up camp.

By 1760 the French were losing control of southern India, and the East India Company took over positions such as Chidambaram, an important South Indian temple site on a branch of the Kaveri River called the Kollidam. Ward was most likely stationed at Chidambaram in late 1760, when Eyre Coote moved a force under Major Monson to weaken the French presence. The French retreated inside Chidambaram's Nataraja Temple at the centre of the town. To force them out of the temple, the British transported two "eighteen-pounder" guns down the Coromandel Coast to the mouth of the Kollidam River, then moved them up the river on catamarans towards Chidambaram. Once in position, the British fired them into the temple compound. By May 1760, at the expense of the Nataraja Temple, the British had driven the French out of Chidambaram.<sup>27</sup> Robert Orme described the fight between the British and the French at Chidambaram in 1760 in the second volume of his *Military Transactions*.<sup>28</sup> He had left India by 1760, so he would have relied on people like Francis Swain Ward to provide eyewitness accounts of the events.

One of Ward's paintings is of the step tank inside Chidambaram's Nataraja Temple. It shows several Indian men who are bathing and standing along the tank's stepped edges. The shadow falling along the east side of the tank's colonnade and the orange tinted clouds above the shadowed area tell us that it was sunrise. Ward would have been seated at the south edge of the tank while he sketched the scene.<sup>29</sup> The pencil sketch that the painting is based on is preserved in a manuscript from the private library of King George III. [Figure 2.11] Ward wrote a page of notes to accompany the sketch,





*Figure 2.5.* A choultry possibly near Vellore, by Francis Swain Ward, 1771. British Library, Foster 22. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 2.6.* A choultry by Francis Swain Ward, 1772. British Library, Foster 14. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

describing the temple, and naming its various parts. He described the people bathing in the tank as Brahmins, saying that they washed constantly, and that the tank's water would be spoiled if a non-Brahmin or a European entered it.<sup>30</sup> Of all Ward's paintings, his landscape of the tank inside Chidambaram's Nataraja Temple is the least concerned with making a statement about the East Indian Company's military presence.

Ward made another pencil sketch of the temple at Chidambaram which is inside the album from King George III's library, along with the explanatory sheet of notes mentioned above.<sup>31</sup> The same album also contains maps, plans, and topographical views of the Carnatic, all of which relate to the battles waged against the French in the mid-eighteenth century. The maps indicate the locations of these Anglo-French conflicts, including those at Tiruchirappalli, Chidambaram, and Madurai. By placing the two pencil drawings of Chidambaram in this album, the librarian of King George III was classifying Ward's drawings as visual documentation of the East India Company's conflicts with the French in eighteenth-century India. Far from being benign landscapes, they were seen as information about the battles of the Carnatic Wars.

The final place that Ward was stationed before his dishonourable removal from India was Madurai. Yusuf Khan, the governor of Madurai who the Company appointed in 1756 after the First Siege of Madurai,<sup>32</sup> had ceased communicating with the Company. By 1762 he had allegedly taken control of Madurai without the Company's consent,<sup>33</sup> so troops were sent to Madurai to remove him. In March 1764, Lieutenant Francis Swain Ward was amongst the troops stationed at Madurai, waiting to take part in what would be known as the Second Siege of Madurai, in June of that year. By October, the



*Figure 2.7.* Step Tank inside the Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram by Francis Swain Ward, 1770. British Library, Foster 21. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 2.8.* The Teppakulam at Madurai by Francis Swain Ward, 1770. British Library, Foster 21. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 2.9.* View of Madurai from the army's military lines by Francis Swain Ward, c.1772. British Library, Foster 34. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Company had reclaimed Madurai, and Yusuf Khan had been captured and hanged. Judging by Ward's two paintings of Madurai, the Company's troops, under the command of Major Achilles Preston,<sup>34</sup> were stationed between the large public tank to the east of Madurai, known as the Teppakulam, and the high ground to the south-east of the city wall.

In the spring of 1764, while awaiting their orders at Madurai, sickness was rife amidst the Company's troops and the morale of European soldiers plummeted.<sup>35</sup> On 28 March 1764, a group of five lieutenants, one of whom was Francis Swain Ward, requested permission to resign whilst they were based at Madurai.<sup>36</sup> In their petition, they wrote that they had been unfairly passed over for promotion, and to escalate their request, they claimed that other soldiers would follow their example and also resign. This placed the East India Company in a difficult position. It was imperative that the Company's troops remained at Madurai, so the Madras Council had to either promote or punish the five dissenting men immediately. To set an example to the other soldiers, the latter happened.

On 4 April 1764, the Council at Fort St George accepted the five men's resignations and expressed its lack of patience with their demands in a letter authored by the Governor of Madras, Robert Palk.

I have received your two very extraordinary letters of the 24th and 25th, from which I perceive that you, the commanding officer [at Madurai], cannot easily give up the article of grievances, and instead of putting your orders in execution and sending away those that are resolved to be discontented, and by means banishing Faction and establishing Obedience and Subordination, you have descended to little pitiful stories that, I suppose, never had any existence but in brains full of malice, rancor and revenge.<sup>37</sup>

Ward and the four other lieutenants were dismissed, and the Company's directors in London ordered that the five men "should be sent to England, and not re-employed at any of our other Presidencies".<sup>38</sup>

The Company's determination to implement this decision was further expressed in the case of George Buck, another of the five lieutenants that was dismissed. It appears that Buck, "the most undeserving of those Officers, has in the last of this season surreptitiously found means to embark for India". Instructions were issued from London "to cause a strict enquiry to be made after him, that he may be sent back by the first conveyance".<sup>39</sup> The Company's reaction to Buck's disobedience sent a message to the others that returning to India was a punishable offence. Francis Swain Ward was back in England by the end of 1764, and immediately began petitioning the East India Company to allow his return to India. The first of these petitions, received on 28 December 1764, was recorded in the Company's Court Minutes as "Lieutenant Francis Swain Ward praying for the reasons therein mentioned [has asked] to be restored to his Rank in the Company's Troops at Fort St George Presidency".<sup>40</sup>

### Ward in London: 1764–1773

In the winter of 1764–1765, after living in India for seven years, Francis Swain Ward returned to Britain. He had been stripped of his army commission and banned from

travelling to anywhere controlled by the East India Company because of his “unsoldierlike and ... mutinous manner in the Face of the Enemy”, and his attempt to “induce others to do the same”.<sup>41</sup> Ward was 30 years old and was desperate for the Company’s Court of Directors to overturn their decision. Over the next seven years in London, he repeatedly petitioned the Court of Directors in the hope that they would reverse their judgement.<sup>42</sup> In 1772 his wish was finally granted, with the Company granting his return after buying the ten landscape paintings.

In April 1765, Francis Swain Ward publicly exhibited his first painting in London after joining the “Society of Artists of Great Britain”.<sup>43</sup> The Society’s mandate was to provide a venue where contemporary artists could publicly display their work. Its establishment in 1761 was a landmark event, with its annual spring show making contemporary British art accessible to the public in exchange for an admission charge. Before the mid-eighteenth century, paintings of faraway places, famous people, and historical events were the private property of wealthy families and would have only been seen by the people who moved within that sphere of British society. The Society of Artists’ annual spring exhibitions provided a new and exciting opportunity for the public to view the world through art.

Before the Society of Artists was formed, there were a few other public venues in London for the display of art. One of these, founded in the 1740s, was the Vauxhall Gardens, London’s largest meeting place at that time, which contained pavilions filled with theatrical paintings. For one shilling, anyone could enjoy the garden’s amusements. Sculptures were dotted throughout the gardens, musicians played the compositions of George Frederick Handel, and oil paintings were placed inside two specially constructed areas.<sup>44</sup> One such area was the “Supper Boxes”, a set of open-air pavilions where people could pay to take meals. Behind the seated diners, paintings were used as theatrical backdrops, providing an amusing spectacle to anyone who walked past. Another place where paintings were displayed was called “The Prince of Wales’s Pavilion” or the “Pillared Saloon”. The paintings were regularly changed and could depict themes such as stories from literature, countryside dalliances, and current events. The main artist of these paintings from the 1740s to 1760s, both in the Supper Boxes and in the Prince of Wales Pavilion, was Francis Hayman (1708–1776), one of the founding members of the Society of Artists.<sup>45</sup>

The Society of Artists’ first exhibition was held in the spring of 1761, in a building within another of London’s public gardens. Spring Gardens was smaller than the Vauxhall Gardens, but its location on the north bank of the Thames, between Charing Cross and St James’s Park, made it easier to reach. By contrast, to reach the Vauxhall Gardens one had to take a private ferry across the Thames. Every spring for a decade, the Society of Artists hosted its annual exhibition in the Great Hall in Spring Gardens, where for a shilling, which included an exhibition catalogue, one could view artworks showing recognisable, contemporary subjects that the public would have found entertaining and informative.<sup>46</sup>

The Society of Artists was dealt a powerful blow in December 1768, when Joshua Reynolds, one of its founders, became the President of the newly founded Royal Academy. If invited to join, members of the Royal Academy received the official sanction and patronage of King George III. This made Royal Academy membership more desirable, so many of the Society of Artists’ more successful members, including

Francis Hayman, joined the Royal Academy. Its exhibition venue was a gallery building on Pall Mall, measuring 300 feet long, which was secured through the favour of the King.<sup>47</sup> The founding of the Royal Academy created a massive schism within London's artistic community.<sup>48</sup> Emotions ran high, and in 1769, 16 of the Society of Artists' 24 directors were voted out of office.<sup>49</sup> The indignation that the remaining members of the Society felt towards the Royal Academy was expressed in an anonymously authored publication titled *The Conduct of the Royal Academicians, While Members of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, viz. From the Year 1760, to their Expulsion in the Year 1769*.<sup>50</sup> The defection of so many members to the Royal Academy created a vacuum in the Society of Artists' membership.

Francis Swain Ward stepped into this vacuum in the late 1760s. He was appointed a Fellow of the Society of Artists in June 1769, and by April 1771, he was Secretary to the Board.<sup>51</sup> Being an inside member of the Society of Artists was a massive boost to Ward's artistic career. Despite the upheaval caused by the Royal Academy's creation, the Society of Artists was still considered by many to be the better and more accessible of the two London-based exhibition societies.<sup>52</sup> For a soldier-artist to walk into circumstances like these was fortuitous, and Ward would have made the most out of his rising status.

The biggest change to the Society of Artists while Francis Swain Ward served as secretary was the decision to purchase a new exhibition venue.<sup>53</sup> The move was most likely prompted by their rivalry with the Royal Academy, and was intended to demonstrate the Society of Artists' strength and permanence.<sup>54</sup> In 1771 it held its last exhibition in the Great Room at Spring Gardens, and on 13 May 1772, the Society opened inside a newly constructed space called the New Room, on the Strand, near Exeter Exchange.<sup>55</sup> The Society of Artists' first exhibitions in the New Room would have been well attended, helping Ward to further promote his landscapes, and gain the attention of the East India Company's directors. Ward's paintings achieved what his written petitions to the East India Company couldn't do. He caught the attention of some powerful men who allowed him to return to India.

On 23 April 1765, before Ward ascended the ranks of the Society of Artists, he exhibited his first painting in London. It was a small picture described as "a flower piece" in the Society's catalogue, which gave Ward's address in London as "High Holborn".<sup>56</sup> The following year, on 12 February 1766, he sent a petition to the East India Company's Court of Directors, asking to return to India. His petition was rejected, and a response was recorded that he would never again be permitted "to serve again in a military capacity in any of the Company's settlements or be allowed to reside in or return to India on any pretence or consideration whatsoever".<sup>57</sup> Ward persisted with his demand, and in a minute dated 19 March 1766, we learn that he, and another one of the dismissed men from Madurai, presented a case to the Governor and Council of Fort St George Madras, in an attempt to prove they had been wrongfully punished.<sup>58</sup>

In April 1768 Ward exhibited three items with the Society of Artists. Two of them were miniature portraits, one of a man and the other of a lady.<sup>59</sup> The third item he exhibited was the pencil drawing of the tank inside of the Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram.<sup>60</sup> It was the first time that he had exhibited a picture alluding to his time in India. The sketch became the basis for Ward's landscape painting titled



“The Brahmin’s Bath at Chillembrum”, which he exhibited with the Society in 1770. [Figure 2.7] The drawing in the 1768 exhibition became part of King George III’s private library. Perhaps Ward gave the sketch to the King when the Royal Academy was established, in the hope that he would be asked to join.

The following year, in May 1769, Ward exhibited two more small portraits with the Society of Artists.<sup>61</sup> One was of the Nawab of the Carnatic, Muhammad Ali Khan, the East India Company’s main ally during the Carnatic Wars. News of the Nawab had been reported in Britain, partially because the Company’s alliance with him was important, but also because Company officials “vied with each other for the privilege of lending money to [him] at usurious rates of interest”.<sup>62</sup> The Nawab supported the Company’s military campaigns against the French, supplying his own private troops, and paying protection money to the Company. Ward’s portrait of the Nawab showed how he looked when he was in his 30s, having just emerged victorious against the French, under the East India Company’s protection. The Nawab’s reward for his loyalty and support was to retain his kingdom and title, but at the price of his kingdom’s financial independence. In the years that followed, the Company demanded that the Nawab pay off debts accrued during the Carnatic Wars, and through these debts, his political powers were constricted, reducing him to a puppet of the East India Company.<sup>63</sup> The small painting of Muhammad Ali Khan is the only portrait by Ward that can be located today. It was acquired by George Pigot in around 1769, and was made into a mezzotint in 1772, most likely at his expense.<sup>64</sup> Following Pigot’s



*Figure 2.10.* Sher Shah’s Tomb at Sassaram, by Francis Swain Ward, 1773. British Library, Foster 25. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



unexpected death at Madras in 1777, his art collection must have been sold off. Ward's portrait of Muhammad Ali Khan is now part of the Duke of Wellington's private collection at Stratfield Saye, Hampshire. It is small for a full-length portrait, measuring only 62.5 centimetres tall by 50 centimetres wide. Its diminutive size is typical of the artworks that Ward produced before 1770.

In 1769, when Francis Swain Ward was made a Fellow of the Society of Artists, the wording of his petitions to the East India Company changed. On 8 March 1769, he informed the Court of Directors that he was the perfect candidate for survey work, citing his ability to paint and draw landscapes.

Having made Surveying my Study, I beg leave to petition your Hon<sup>bl</sup> Court, that I may be appointed your surveyor to any part of India you may think proper to send me, and having likewise some skill in Drawing and Painting, as is known to some member of your Hon<sup>ble</sup> Court. I should with great pleasure employ those talents for the Company on all such occasions as might be required, and shall endeavor by my attention and assiduity to merit the countenance of your favor, and give satisfaction to my superiors abroad.<sup>65</sup>

His petition of 1769 caught the attention of the Chairman of the Court of Directors, as is evidenced by a note at the base of the page, saying, "Recommended by G Colebrooke".<sup>66</sup> George Colebrooke, the Chairman of the East India Company from 1767 to 1770, and again in 1772, was also an influential businessman who was skilled at manipulation.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps he sensed an opportunity behind patronising Francis Swain Ward's work.<sup>68</sup> In that same year, high-ranking men within the Company were supporting the re-enlistment of East India Company soldiers, particularly at the rank of captain. This trend is described in a letter that George Colebrooke wrote to Robert Clive in 1769,<sup>69</sup> where Colebrooke supported the move to re-enlist East India Company soldiers who had returned to Britain.

It is likely that Ward's frequent petitions, which by then would have been a familiar sight to the Company's directors, singled him out as a candidate for re-enlistment. His letter dated March 1769 confidently offered his skills as an artist and surveyor in the same year that he had begun exhibiting large landscapes of India in the Society of Artists' annual shows. It is hard to know exactly what privileges accompanied his appointment as a Fellow of the Society in 1769, but it is probably not a coincidence that he began painting on much larger canvases at precisely this time. The pictures he exhibited in 1765, 1768, and 1769 were all described as "small" or "miniature" in the Society of Artists' catalogues. As a Fellow of the Society, perhaps he gained access to a more spacious, salubrious studio where he could paint on large canvases. From 1770 to 1773, in four consecutive spring exhibitions with the Society of Artists, he created and displayed all ten of the landscape paintings that the Company acquired, plus a few others.

In April 1770, Ward exhibited his first two landscapes. These were described in the Society of Artists' catalogue as "The bramin's tank (or bath) in the pagoda of Chillenbrum in the East-Indes, sacred to the Gentoo bramins, who are described in their manner of washing and praying", [Figure 2.7] and the "Teppey colum tank (or the great bath near Madura in the East-Indes) describing the natives, and the manner

of travelling. N.B. This bath is 1000 feet square".<sup>70</sup> [Figure 2.8] Both of the landscapes exhibited in 1770 were extremely large, with the painting of the Teppakulam at Madurai being one of the largest paintings in the series, measuring 81 by 130 centimetres.<sup>71</sup> The painting of the tank at Chidambaram was based on the drawing Ward exhibited with the Society of Artists in 1768. [Figure 2.11] The two paintings exhibited in 1770 both show man-made water tanks, so would have been intriguing subjects for a public exhibition in Georgian London, where people sought entertainment by visiting specially designed public spaces like the Vauxhall Gardens. Paintings of festivals, street scenes, the dalliances of peasants, and happenings within public houses were popular topics for artworks in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. Regardless of their level of knowledge or interest in the East India Company's dealings, the men and women who attended the Society of Artists' exhibition in 1770 could relate to these spectacles of public behaviour in another part of the world. The painting of the tank inside the Nataraja Temple at Chidambaram showed a serene, early morning moment within an exotic setting, where the male-dominated society of Brahmins prepared themselves for the day. In the painting of the Teppakulam at Madurai, Ward placed three British men in the foreground. Two are having a conversation while the third is seen pausing to admire the view, inviting the exhibition's attendees in London to join him. The people in Ward's paintings mirrored the busy happenings of London, where people such as the attendees of the Society of Artists exhibitions gathered in public places.

Ward may have staged his paintings to gain public attention, but his key audience was the East India Company. His landscapes were recognisable to military men who had been in the south of India in the 1750s and 1760s. By 1770, the military heroes of the Carnatic Wars such as Stringer Lawrence, Eyre Coote, Robert Clive, and George Pocock were all alive, and might have seen Ward's landscapes in London. While Clive was no longer enjoying the celebrity of a hero, he had styled himself as a gentleman, owned several homes (including one in London), and was an ally of one of the most powerful men in East India House, George Colebrooke.<sup>72</sup> High-ranking Company officials would have known about Ward's paintings, as would returned soldiers, or anyone with connections to India. Robert Orme had published descriptions of several places in Ward's landscapes, particularly Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, and Chidambaram, in the first volume of his *Military Transactions*.

In April 1771, Ward exhibited three more landscapes from India. The Society of Artists' catalogue listed these as "The grand entrance to the Pagoda of Seringham, in the East Indies",<sup>73</sup> [Figure 2.2] "A choultry, built for the reception of travellers, common on all the roads in the East",<sup>74</sup> [Figure 2.5] and "A view, in passing the mountains near Velure, in the East".<sup>75</sup> The first of these, showing the temple gateway at Srirangam Island, was the largest of the three paintings exhibited in 1771, and was the same size as the painting of Madurai's Teppakulam that Ward exhibited the previous year.<sup>76</sup> The 12 Indian figures painted into the temple gateway composition are all engaged in civilian activities. Some are going about their day's work, such as a beggar, a woman carrying a bundle on her head, and a man balancing a pot on his hip. Comparable activities would have happened on London's streets. Other people in the painting are partaking in recreational pursuits, including three men that have climbed to the top of a large gateway, one of whom is adjusting his turban. Once again, Ward used a landscape to show London's public parallel activities in another part of the world.

One of the other paintings exhibited in 1771, titled “A choultry”,<sup>77</sup> showed one of the open stone porches that British troops would have encountered while traversing southern India. [Figure 2.5] It is set within a green, mountainous landscape, with the edge of a hill fort to the right. Through the centre of the choultry, a temple gopuram is visible in the distance. The location of the choultry has yet to be identified, but it is most likely in the mountainous areas near Vellore. The third landscape that Ward exhibited in 1771, described in the exhibition catalogue as showing the mountains near Vellore, was not acquired by the East India Company, and is now missing. Between September and December 1761, soon after Ward left Chidambaram, British troops captured Vellore, and deposed its leader, Murtaza Ali. Because we know that the missing landscape taken near Vellore was exhibited alongside the painting the Company acquired of the choultry, it is likely that the two landscapes, which were exhibited next to each other, were both views near Vellore.<sup>78</sup>

The following year, the Society of Artists of Great Britain moved from Spring Gardens to its newly established venue on the Strand.<sup>79</sup> For the Society, the opening of the New Room was a way to exert its superiority over the Royal Academy.<sup>80</sup> For Ward, it was an opportunity to take part in the Society’s activities at the height of its popularity. The New Room took longer than expected to prepare for the 1772 exhibition, which opened a few weeks later than usual, in May of that year. The launching of the Society of Artists’ 1772 exhibition would have been well attended, as visitors were curious to view both the exhibition and new building. The 1772 exhibition’s opening day was a spectacular event that featured singers and musicians who performed a dramatic ode about Britannia invoking the muses of the liberal arts to defy Death and show future generations the splendour of the current day.<sup>81</sup> It was the 13th annual exhibition of the Society of Artists and their grandest one to date.<sup>82</sup>

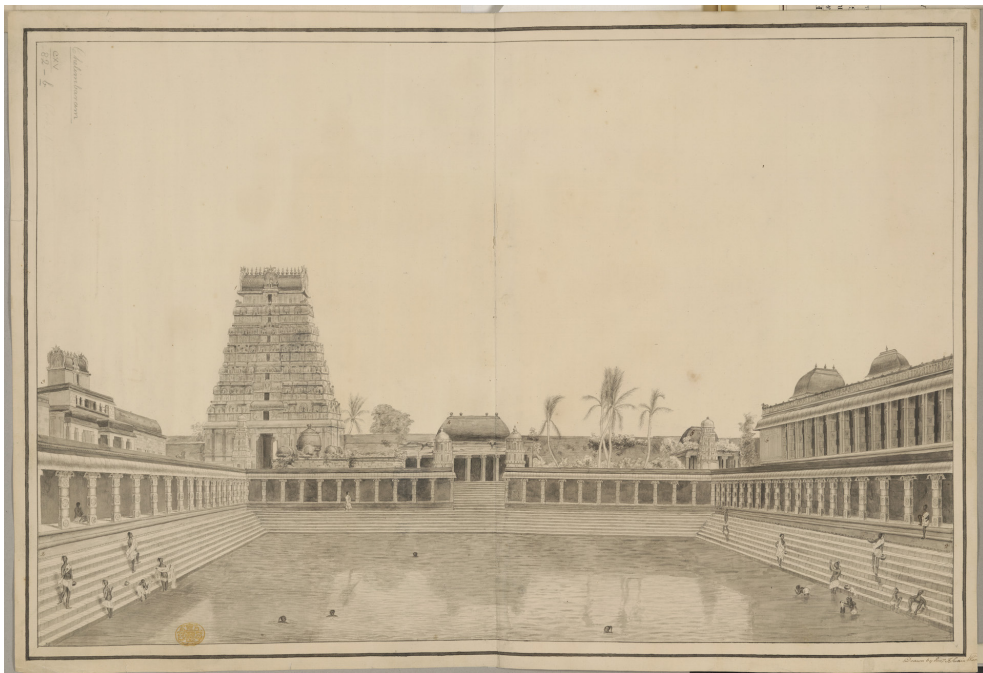
Ward chose to display only two landscapes of India in the 1772 exhibition.<sup>83</sup> These were titled “A View of the city of Madura, in the East Indies, taken during the siege” [Figure 2.9] and “A choultry for worship, ditto”. [Figure 2.6] The view of Madurai shows the line of defence where Ward must have stood in preparation for the Second Siege to commence, in the spring of 1763, before he was dishonourably sent home by the Madras Council. It is curious that Ward decided to paint a view that would remind the Company of his last days as a lieutenant in the Madras Army. Perhaps he deliberately wanted to confront the East India Company’s directors with the circumstances of his dismissal. The other painting exhibited in 1772 was of a stone choultry.<sup>84</sup> [Figure 2.6] Unlike the landscape of a choultry that Ward exhibited the previous year,<sup>85</sup> this one shows the stone porch at an angle, with an Indian man standing inside of it, dressed in white robes and a turban, closing the lid of a large brown trunk, possibly in the act of packing up the belongings of an unseen European soldier. The view in the background is unidentified, but it resembles the countryside close to Madurai. Could Ward have been alluding to his departure from Madurai in 1763?

It isn’t clear when the East India Company became Francis Swain Ward’s patron, but he was undisputedly receiving the Court of Directors’ favour by 1772. In September of that year, the Company agreed to reinstate Ward at the rank of captain in the Madras Military.<sup>86</sup> By 19 March 1773 his next four paintings were complete, and the Company had arranged, at its expense, to have them framed, along with the others they intended to purchase.<sup>87</sup> There is no record of where the framing was done, or how

much it cost, but it most certainly happened in London, where reputable furniture workshops were equipped for such commissions. Today, the ten paintings are still in their original, matching eighteenth-century frames, proving that they were intended to be displayed as a set. The framing was finished in advance of the Society of Artists' spring exhibition of 1773.

On 29 April 1773 Ward exhibited not four, but five, of his landscapes from India with the Society of Artists, all of which were displayed in their new, matching frames.<sup>88</sup> Besides the four new paintings, he re-exhibited the painting of the Teppakulam at Madurai, which had already been in the Society's show in 1770. [Figure 2.8] Of the four new landscapes that Ward exhibited in 1773, three were views in and around Tiruchirappalli. These were "The back of Tritipinopoly [Fort]...",<sup>89</sup> "The Grand Festival Choultry, in Syringham", and "Virra Malli, a very extraordinary rock and temple, in the Tondiman Woods".<sup>90</sup> [Figures 2.1, 2.3 and 2.4] The other new painting was of the "Mausoleum of Seer Shaw, at Sassaram, in the Kingdom of Bengal".<sup>91</sup>

The three pictures relating to Tiruchirappalli and its environs showed locations where the East India Company fought during the Carnatic Wars. The Mausoleum of Sher Shah at Sassaram is the only painting from the Company's set of ten paintings of a site outside Madras Presidency. It is unclear why Ward included a monument in Bihar within his repertoire. Maybe he travelled through Bengal at some point between 1757 and 1763, but surely a posting in Madras towards the end of the Carnatic Wars kept



*Figure 2.11.* Drawing of the step tank at Chidambaram by Francis Swain Ward, c.1760. British Library, Maps K.Top.115, 82.b.3. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

him in the south. Sassaram was on a military road used in the eighteenth century, so it is possible that Ward somehow travelled past Sher Shah's Tomb in the late 1750s.<sup>92</sup> Another possibility is that the Court of Directors instructed Ward to paint a picture of a monument in Bengal Presidency. Perhaps Ward never went to Sassaram and relied on detailed drawings by another soldier to create the painting.<sup>93</sup> Regardless of whether Ward had ever seen Sher Shah's Tomb or not, we know that by 1773, he agreed to sell ten paintings to the East India Company.

By March 1773, the Company had arranged for Ward to return to Madras, accompanied by his new wife, in exchange for the ten landscape paintings, a payment of 200 guineas in London, and an additional payment, to be made "on his arrival at Fort St George, ... the further Sum of One thousand pagodas as a testimony of the esteem the Court entertain of his valuable and very ingenious Performances".<sup>94</sup> Two hundred guineas was a considerable amount of money in 1773, but the Company had certainly secured a bargain. Edward Penny, the Royal Academician whose painting of Robert Clive was purchased with the East India Company's Military Fund in the same year,<sup>95</sup> [Figure 4.1] was paid the same amount for only one painting. If the Company underpaid Ward, it explains the additional payment of a thousand pagodas that he received at Madras. This was most likely arranged because the Company was cash-poor in London, but cash-rich in India. In 1772 a major banking crisis plunged the Company into debt. The directors suspended dividend payments to shareholders, and the Bank of England had to step in to avert its collapse. A loan was agreed, but at the cost of the Company's affairs falling under parliamentary scrutiny through the creation of Lord North's Regulating Act of 1773.<sup>96</sup> With Parliament's new controls over the Company's finances, it might not have been possible for the directors to authorise a larger sum for the purchase of the paintings in 1773. Although the painting by Edward Penny of Robert Clive was paid for out of a separate fund, perhaps its purchase in the same year for 200 guineas fixed an acceptable cash threshold for buying the Ward paintings, which was then supplemented in Madras.

Britain's economy changed considerably between the mid-1760s and 1773. When Ward arrived in London in 1765, he walked into a prosperous, vibrant city and benefitted from the schism between the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain and the newly formed Royal Academy. His opportunities as an artist increased, and he caught the attention of the East India Company's Court of Directors by exhibiting his landscapes. The banking crisis of 1772, paired with internal problems, brought the Company's days of unlimited financial growth to an end,<sup>97</sup> but despite this, on 19 March 1773 the East India Company came into full possession of Ward's ten landscapes. The framed paintings were displayed "in the most convenient part of this House",<sup>98</sup> inside the Committee of Correspondence Room.<sup>99</sup> This important working area was close to the Directors' Court Room, where the six seascapes by George Lambert and Samuel Scott were also displayed as a set, in matching frames, in a single room.

### Ward's return to India: 1773–1794

Francis Swain Ward had trained as a professional landscape painter before he applied for an East India Company cadetship in the late 1750s,<sup>100</sup> probably making him a



compelling candidate for the East India Company's Madras Army, which, at that time, was only a decade old. Draftsmanship was an established military skill, with maps, topographical drawings, plans, and studies of buildings being used to supplement reports.<sup>101</sup> From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the British army employed professional drawing masters at the Royal Military College in Woolwich. East India Company troops were expected to reach the same education standards as the King's Troops, and until the early nineteenth century, the Company used their training facilities. As a landscape artist who had achieved success in London between 1764 and 1773, it must have made sense for Ward to maintain a strong professional connection with the East India Company as an artist and draftsman.

When Francis Swain Ward returned to India in 1773 he intended to continue working as a landscape painter while serving in the Madras Army. He worked in a genre connected with his military career, and had put forward a proposal to the Company in 1769 offering to serve as a draftsman and landscape artist as part of a posting in India.<sup>102</sup> He might have been more successful in Madras if he had worked as a free-lance portrait painter, but he remained a landscape painter, probably to align his work as an artist with his military role. Perhaps Ward hoped that George Pigot, one of his patrons in London who was Governor of Madras in 1775, would assist his artistic career. Ward's portrait of Muhammad Ali Khan that was exhibited with the Society of Artists in 1769 was part of Pigot's private art collection, and was published as a mezzotint in 1772, probably through his financial backing. Unfortunately, George Pigot fell afoul of the Madras Council in 1777 and died soon afterwards under dubious circumstances. Ward tried independently to have his paintings made into engravings<sup>103</sup> and advertised his intention to publish them in 1785.<sup>104</sup> However these plans never transpired in Ward's lifetime.

In 1790, with his hope of earning a living as an artist fading, Ward wrote to the Court of Directors in London, offering to sell them all the landscapes he had painted since his return to India in 1773. He implored the Company to compensate him for his efforts, pleading to the Court of Directors that he had "a large family and upwards of thirty years service" and was "embarrassed" by his material circumstances.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately, the Court of Directors had no intention of funding an artist in India, and as they already owned ten landscapes by Ward, it was unlikely they would purchase any more. When Ward died on 9 March 1794, he left behind a widow and seven children.<sup>106</sup> His paintings were published as engravings after his death.<sup>107</sup>

Ward's failure as a landscape painter after 1773 was partially connected with the decline of the Society of Artists. Incapable of competing with the Royal Academy, it was dissolved in 1791, making Ward's accreditation useless. Another issue that damaged his career in India, both before and after his stint as an artist in London, was the habitual mistreatment of British soldiers from lower and middling orders in South Asia. This is a difficult topic to research because records relating to soldiers were compiled by the establishment that mistreated them. Evidence only occurs when disagreements are noted between white soldiers and their superiors, with the soldiers usually being singled out as renegades or mutineers.<sup>108</sup> The available facts we have about the two parts of Francis Swain Ward's military career in India strongly suggest that his career difficulties related to profound mistreatment by his superiors. The first half of his career ended with him being accused of "mutinous" behaviour and a "turbulent

disposition" that provoked "many difficulties and troubles".<sup>109</sup> His later military career was distressing in another way, with him and his family trapped in a life of poverty. His failures in India were manifestations of the widespread weaknesses inherent in the East India Company's army, where white soldiers could become financially strapped and scapegoated as troublemakers.

### Ward's landscapes and East India House

When Ward returned from India in the 1760s, he stepped into a thriving exhibition scene. In the late eighteenth century, Britain's lower and middling orders were also becoming increasingly outspoken and politicised.<sup>110</sup> Ward's letters, proposals, and petitions to the East India Company's Court of Directors from December 1764 until the early 1770s, demanding his re-enlistment into the Madras Army, are evidence of this trend.<sup>111</sup> His rising position within the Society of Artists was fuelled by the exodus of its members to the Royal Academy. The opening of the Society's new exhibition space on the Strand, paired with the Company's decision to purchase the landscapes exhibited in the early 1770s, marked the apotheosis of Ward's artistic career.

As a soldier, Francis Swain Ward's career differed tremendously from other British landscape artists who travelled to India in the late eighteenth century. The most recognised of these later artists, William Hodges (1744–1797) and Thomas (1749–1840) and William Daniell (1769–1837), exhibited their paintings in London more than a decade after Francis Swain Ward. Hodges had the pedigree of a British landscape artist, having studied under Richard Wilson, the famous painter who was dubbed the "English Claude". When Hodges arrived in northern India in 1780, he had already exhibited his paintings of the South Pacific at the Royal Academy, after serving as Captain James Cook's official artist on board his second expedition. As for Thomas Daniell, he trained as an artist at the Royal Academy in the early 1770s. Before his arrival in India in 1786, along with his 17-year-old nephew William, Thomas had exhibited 30 paintings of other subjects in the Royal Academy's annual exhibitions.<sup>112</sup> The East India Company's Court of Directors never purchased, commissioned, or even accepted as gifts any of the picturesque views that were painted by William Hodges and the Daniells. Hodges received the patronage of Warren Hastings in India, but this patronage was offered not through the auspices of the Company's Court of Directors, but in a private capacity that made the paintings Hastings' property. The closest the Company came to acquiring picturesque landscapes by these Royal Academy-accredited painters was the purchase of printed plate books, such as William Hodges' *Select Views in India* and Thomas and William Daniell's *Oriental Scenery* for the Company's library.<sup>113</sup> A handful of paintings by the Daniells and by Hodges eventually found their way into the India Office Collections, but these were acquired in the early twentieth century, long after the East India Company was abolished.<sup>114</sup>

How does one classify the ten Ward paintings? Unlike the Royal Academicians who painted landscapes of India in the late eighteenth century, Francis Swain Ward embedded himself within the military environment of the East India Company. His artistic work was inseparable from his military career, and his time as an artist in London, when his paintings were exhibited with the Society of Artists, was the product of his career in the Madras Army. He used topographical painting in an imaginative way to

connect his artistic output with the petitions he sent to the Court of Directors, using paintings to explain and justify the Company's expansion in another part of the world. Their placement inside East India House's Committee of Correspondence Room catapulted the Company beyond the symbolic seascapes of George Lambert and Samuel Scott and into the world of conquest and imperial power.<sup>115</sup>

Ward's desire to be part of the Company's establishment was emphasised by his communications with Robert Orme.<sup>116</sup> In 1769, shortly after Orme published the first volume of his *Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, Ward was painting landscapes of several locations mentioned in Orme's book. Ward participated in the commercial agency that he lived within, both as a soldier and as an artist, at a time when the arts in London had entered a new stage of development. Britain's success during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), paired with the East India Company's mercantile growth, gave rise to a new sense of national purpose and identity. Britain was in the grips of a cultural renaissance, which inspired thinkers and artists to link mercantile, military, and protestant agendas with a new "body politic" that took pride in a new empire.<sup>117</sup> Following the Seven Years' War, there was public interest in the overseas territories that linked Britain's imperial and mercantile empire with first-hand reportage of India. Ward's landscapes showed, for the first time, what these places looked like. There were many other paintings relating to India that were exhibited in London in the 1760s and 1770s, but they were by artists, such as Francis Hayman, Edward Penny, and Benjamin West, who had never travelled to South Asia. [Figures 3.1, 4.1, 4.14] Ward's landscapes were unique, first-hand accounts of the places where the Company's armies had been.

The decision to display all ten landscapes in matching frames, and to place them inside a single room of East India House, imitated the decoration of the Directors' Court Room, where the six seascapes of George Lambert and Samuel Scott, also in matching frames, had been on display for several decades. The Ward paintings documented another stage of the Company's expansion, inside another important ground floor room in East India House, the Committee of Correspondence Room. It was near the Directors' Court Room, but was on the building's south side, set away from the building's north-facing entrance. It was a rectangular room, designed and constructed in the 1730s by Theodor Jacobsen, with a courtyard on its east side. It measured about 30 feet long by 20 feet wide,<sup>118</sup> making it narrower, but the same length as the perfectly cubical Directors' Court Room.<sup>119</sup> It was entered through a single door, next to the private offices of the Company's highest-ranking directors, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

To the Court of Directors in 1773, the ten Ward landscapes were a nostalgic nod towards the East India Company's operations before Lord North's Regulating Act was passed into law. The ten paintings were purchased and their matching frames were commissioned in March 1773, shortly before the Act was passed, while the East India Company was frantically petitioning Parliament not to pass the bill.<sup>120</sup> Its objective was to monitor the East India Company's actions, both in India and in London. When Lord North's Regulating Act was passed into law, the Committee of Correspondence became a source of covert power for the Company because it provided a loophole from Parliamentary scrutiny. As its name suggests, its role was to oversee the drafting of correspondence to India which covered a multitude of matters that were impossible

to regulate. In the words of James Mill, the Committee of Correspondence was the “master of the facts scattered in a most voluminous correspondence”.<sup>121</sup> By controlling the minutiae of the Company’s operations, the Committee of Correspondence allowed the Company to retain a kernel of independence that went undetected by Parliament. Francis Swain Ward’s landscapes were a reminder to the Committee of Correspondence of the unbridled power the East India Company held over its affairs before 1773. The ten paintings were potent keepsakes of the East India Company’s military actions in the 1750s and 1760s, and their placement as a set in the Committee of Correspondence Room conveyed nostalgia for the Company’s operations before Lord North’s Regulating Act was passed.

The connection between the Ward landscapes and the Company’s inland conquests of the 1750s and 1760s did not endure. By the early nineteenth century, the meaning behind the ten landscapes was largely forgotten and the set was broken up, with at least half of the paintings being moved from the Committee of Correspondence Room to the Oriental Repository, the combined museum and library that opened in the 1800s. These five landscapes were disconnectedly displayed to the visiting public alongside miscellaneous objects from Asia, making them into general representations of “spaces of empire” that facilitated a vague public understanding of a “common Raj”.<sup>122</sup> Any popularity Ward enjoyed as an artist was supplanted by other British landscape painters. He was pushed into obscurity by more famous, Royal Academy-accredited painters. After his death, his work, which originally commemorated the East India Company’s conquests during the Carnatic Wars, was subsumed into a less detailed, more general understanding of the Company’s actions in India. By the early nineteenth century, Francis Swain Ward’s paintings were no longer seen as the output of a military narrative that commemorated the Company’s rise to dominance. They were simply landscapes of faraway places.

## Notes

- 1 James Vaughan, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 6, 12.
- 2 The one exception to this is John E Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain’s Global Visual Culture 1745–1820* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011).
- 3 G.J. Bryant, *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600–1784* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), 24, 82.
- 4 Vaughn, *Politics of Empire*, 15.
- 5 General Correspondence, 25 March 1757. BL, IOR/E/4/861, 725.
- 6 Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (London: John Nourse, 1773, 1778).
- 7 Letters from Ward to Orme, 1776–1777. BL, Mss Eur Orme OV.83, 17–19, 65–67.
- 8 Pauline Rohatgi, “Preface to a Lost Collection: The Pioneering Art of Francis Swain Ward”, *Marg* XLVI, no. 4 (1995): 40.
- 9 Orme, *Military Transactions*, vol 1, opposite 184, 246, 328, and 348.
- 10 BL, Foster 24.
- 11 BL, Foster 27.
- 12 BL, Foster 30.
- 13 Orme, *Military Transactions*, vol.1, 345.
- 14 Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), 194.

- 15 BL, Foster 10.
- 16 K.R. Venkataraman Ayyar, *A Manual of the Pudukkottai State*, vol.2.2 (Pudukkottai: Sri Brihadamba State Press, 1944), 1118.
- 17 Alexander Dalrymple's map, 1788. BL, Maps, K.Top.115, 65-1; French map titled "Theatre de la Guerre Dans L'Inde", 1770. BL, Maps, K.Top.115, 74.
- 18 Orme, *Military Transactions*, vol.1, 184, 345–346.
- 19 S. Charles Hill, *Yusuf Khan: The Rebel Commandant* (London: Longmans & Co, 1914), 27.
- 20 Society of Artists of Great Britain. *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sculptures, Designs in Architecture, Models, Drawings, Prints, &c. Exhibited by the Society of Artists of Great Britain* (London: William Bunce, 1765–1773), 1771, catalogue number 184.
- 21 BL, Foster 22.
- 22 The missing painting of mountains near Vellore and the painting of the choultry with mountains in the background (BL, F22) were exhibited alongside each other at the Society of Artists spring exhibition, April–May 1771.
- 23 *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1789, p.706.
- 24 Vellore appears on several maps from the 1750s. For example, see BL, K.Top.115, 72 and 73.
- 25 Orme, *Military Transactions*, vol.2, opposite 602. Based on a drawing by John Call.
- 26 BL, Foster 14.
- 27 Madras District Gazetteers: South Arcot (Chennai: Govt Press, 1905), 266.
- 28 Orme, *Military Transactions*, 626, 630, 632, 704.
- 29 British Library, Foster 21.
- 30 King George III Topographical Collection. BL, Maps.K.Top.115, 82b.
- 31 BL, Maps.K.Top.115, 82a and b. Folio 82-b-3 was exhibited by Ward with the Society of Artists in 1768 as catalogue #284.
- 32 The First Siege of Madurai in 1757 is described in Orme, *Military Transactions*, 209–212.
- 33 Orme's *Military Transactions* only covers up to January 1761, so the events at Madurai that led to Ward's expulsion from India are not covered.
- 34 Hill, *Yusuf Khan*, 184.
- 35 Hill, *Yusuf Khan*, 185.
- 36 The five lieutenants were FS Ward, Arnold Hunterman, Robert Phillips, John Bridger, George Buck.
- 37 Robert Palk to Charles Campbell, 2 April 1764. BL, Add.Ms.34686, 10.
- 38 General Correspondence, 1764. BL, IOR E/4/864, 662–3.
- 39 Madras Despatches, 17 March 1769. BL – IOR E/4/864, f. 663
- 40 Court Minutes, 28 December 1764. BL, IOR/B/80, 330.
- 41 Madras Dispatches, 17 March 1769. BL, IOR E/4/864, 662–3.
- 42 For Ward's petitions, see Court Minutes, 12 February 1766. BL, IOR/B/81, f.359; Letter from Francis Swain Ward to the Court, 8 March 1769. BL, IOR/E/1/52, 228; Fort William Dispatches, 19 February 1766. BL, IOR/E/4/618, 269; Court Minutes, 21 April 1773. BL, IOR/B/89, 22.
- 43 Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1765, #149.
- 44 David Coke and Alan Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).
- 45 David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 106–156, 190–196.
- 46 Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 273.
- 47 Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 265.
- 48 Hargreaves, *Candidates for Fame*, ch. 5.
- 49 Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 261.
- 50 Society of Artists, *The Conduct of the Royal Academicians, While Members of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, viz. From the Year 1760, to their Expulsion in the Year 1769* (London: 1771).
- 51 Society of Artists, Minutes for 6 June 1769. Royal Academy Archives, SA/3; Society of Artists, Minutes for 20 April 1771. Royal Academy Archives, SA/10.
- 52 Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 265.



- 53 Society of Artists, Minutes for 12 February 1771, 18 June 1771 and 30 March 1772. Royal Academy Archives, SA/10.
- 54 Matthew Hargreaves, *Candidates for Fame. The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760–1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 118.
- 55 Today this is the location of the Strand Palace Hotel.
- 56 Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1765, 13, #149.
- 57 Court Minutes, 12 February 1766. BL, IOR/B/81, 359
- 58 Court Minutes, 19 March 1766. BL, IOR/B/81, 392
- 59 Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1768, 11, #173 and 174.
- 60 Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1768, 19, #284. This drawing is now in the British Library (Maps K.Top.115, f.82b).
- 61 Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1768, 13, #191 (“Portrait in miniature of a lady”) and #192 (“A small whole length of Mahomed Alli Cawn”).
- 62 Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 40–61.
- 63 Chris Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), 58–61.
- 64 There are copies of the mezzotint in the Royal Collections (RCIN 618757) and the British Museum (1855,0714.7).
- 65 General Correspondence, Letters received, 8 March 1769. BL, IOR/E/1/52, 228–229.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 At that time, Colebrooke was embroiled in a financial scandal. Chris Bayly, ed., *The Raj. India and the British 1600–1947* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1990), 122, #145.
- 68 For more on Colebrooke’s time as Chairman of the East India Company, see Sutherland, *East India Company*, 141, 213; William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London: John Lane, 1924), 234–235.
- 69 Colebrooke to Clive, 1769. BL, Mss Eur G37/58/1, 44–45. See also letter from Stringer Lawrence to the Court of Directors about re-enlisting Captain Arthur Lysaght. BL, Mss Eur/G37/58/1, 46; Lysaght recommended for service by General Lawrence and Colonel Monson. BL, Mss Eur G37/17/38, 4–5.
- 70 BL- F21 and F34. Catalogue numbers 6 and 7 in Society of Artists Catalogue, 1770.
- 71 Two others (F25 and F27) are also this size. The other seven paintings are smaller.
- 72 Lucy Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth Century Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952), 194.
- 73 BL, Foster 27; Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1771, #183.
- 74 BL, Foster 22; Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, 1771, #184.
- 75 Ward also made a drawing titled “View 25 Miles south of Vellore”. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, August 1789, 706.
- 76 BL, Foster 27 measures 81 by 130 cm, as does Foster 34.
- 77 BL, Foster 22.
- 78 The Society of Artists, *Catalogue*, April 1771, #184’ (BL, Foster 22) and #185 (missing).
- 79 The New Room stood on the site now occupied by the Strand Palace Hotel.
- 80 Hargreaves, *Candidates for Fame*, 118.
- 81 “Ode performed at the Opening of the New Exhibition Room of the Royal Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain, written by E. Lloyd, Author of ‘The Powers of the Poem’, etc. and set to Musick by Mr. Hook.” *Gentleman’s Magazine*, May 1772, p. 239.
- 82 See Hargreaves (2005, pp. 126–127) for a description of the 1772 exhibition.
- 83 He exhibited two other paintings that year, but these were not of Indian topics. See “Catalogue of the Pictures.... Exhibited at their New Room near Exeter Exchange, Strand, May the Thirteenth, 1772, by the Society of Artists of Great Britain. The Thirteenth year of Exhibiting”.
- 84 BL, Foster 14.
- 85 BL, Foster 22.

- 86 Madras Dispatches, 13 April 1774. BL, IOR/E/4/866, 55; Madras Army Lists, IOR/L/Mil/11/1; Rohatgi, "Preface", 40 and 51, note 19.
- 87 Court Minutes, 19 March 1773. BL, IOR/B/88, 544.
- 88 Catalogue exhibited by the Society of Artists of Great Britain at their New Room, near Exeter Exchange, Strand, 29 April 1773.
- 89 The catalogue's full title for BL-F24 is "The back of Tritipinopoly; the procession in the fore ground shews the daily custom of carrying water to their gods, in the temple on the rock".
- 90 British Library, Foster 24, 30 and 10.
- 91 British Library, Foster 25.
- 92 Rohatgi, "Preface", 35.
- 93 To date, there is no record of any such detailed sketches, engravings, or paintings before the 1770s. Giles Tillotson, "The Paths of Glory: Representations of Sher Shah's Tomb," *Oriental Art* 37, no. 1 (1991): 4–16.
- 94 Madras Dispatches, 7 April 1773. BL, IOR/E/4/865, 913.
- 95 British Library, Foster 91.
- 96 Sutherland, *East India Company*, 240–268.
- 97 Lucy Sutherland, *Politics and Finance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Hambledon, 1984), 445–446.
- 98 Court Minutes, 19 March 1773. BL, IOR/B/88, 544
- 99 "The East India House, Leadenhall Street." *European Magazine*, March 1803, pp. 167–168.
- 100 Patricia Kattenhorn, *British Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: British Library, 1994), 18.
- 101 Jennifer Howes, *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2010).
- 102 Letter from Ward to the Court of Directors, 8 March 1769. BL, IOR/E/1/52, 228–229.
- 103 Pauline Rohatgi, "Preface to a Lost Collection: The Pioneering Art of Francis Swain Ward", *Marg* 46, no. 4 (1995): 43–44; Letters Received, BL, IOR/E/1/84, part 1, 103.
- 104 *Calcutta Gazette*, March 3, 1785. Ward listed 12 titles of paintings he planned to work into engravings; Rohatgi, "Preface", 51, note 28.
- 105 Letter from Ward at Madras to the "Honorable Charman and Court of Directors for the affairs of the East India Company", 12 August 1790. BL, IOR/E/1/84, part 1, 102–104.
- 106 BL, IOR/E/1/84, 102v.
- 107 Rohatgi, "Preface", 52, note 36.
- 108 Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850* (London: Random House, 2003), 316–317.
- 109 Dispatch from Fort William, 19 February 1766. BL, IOR/E/4/618, 268.
- 110 Colley, *Captives*, 313–314.
- 111 Ward to the Court of Directors, 28 December 1772. BL, IOR/B/80, 330.
- 112 Hermione De Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 183.
- 113 Four copies of Hodges' *Select Views in India* and four copies of Thomas Daniell's *Oriental Scenery* were acquired for the East India Company's library in the early nineteenth century. Catherine Pickett, *Bibliography of the East India Company. Contemporary Printed Sources, 1786–1858* (London: The British Library, 2015), #54, #495.
- 114 BL Hodges Paintings, Foster 396, acquired 1917; Foster 94, acquired 1904; BL Daniell Paintings, Foster 167, acquired 1917; Foster 577, acquired 1915; Foster 669, acquired 1938.
- 115 James M. Vaughn, *The Politics of Empire at the Accession of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).
- 116 Letters from Ward to Orme, 1776–1777. BL, Mss Eur Orme OV.83, 17–19, 65–67.
- 117 Douglas Fordham, *British Art and the Seven Years' War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 3.
- 118 Plan of East India House's ground floor, 1806. BL, IOR/H763A, 14.
- 119 J.C. Platt, "The East India House", in *London*, ed. Charles Knight (London: Charles Knight & Co, 1843), vol.5, 61.

- 120 Copies of these petitions are in BL, IOR/D/27 and D/28.
- 121 Letter from James Mill to Dumont in Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 48; Ainslie T. Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), 207.
- 122 Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2013), 15.

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In recent years, numerous disciplines have advanced the connection between the classics and imperialism in the long nineteenth century to show how literature, history, and art of classical antiquity were manipulated to shape Britain's imperial present.<sup>1</sup> Scholars in the field of postcolonial studies have demonstrated that "imperial themes rooted in classical discourse" were used by Britain's elites as a model, which was manipulated for their purposes, to control a vast overseas empire. For example, under British imperial rule, Greek and Latin figured so prominently in Indian Civil Service exams that men from India were disqualified from running their own country.<sup>2</sup> The focus of such studies rarely precedes 1784, the year that Britain lost its "First Empire", after acknowledging America's independence.<sup>3</sup> It was at this point that the East India Company's territorial gains took on new importance within Britain's imperial consciousness. India's value to the British state increased, resulting in several East India Company artworks being commissioned in the 1790s. In that decade, the Company's Court of Directors commissioned John Bacon to sculpt three statues of individuals in the neoclassical style. However, these were not the first neoclassical portrait sculptures to be commissioned by the Company. The commissions of the 1790s were predated by four earlier neoclassical portrait sculptures of war heroes commissioned in 1760.

The subject of this chapter is these two distinct sets of neoclassical portrait sculptures that were commissioned three decades apart. Comparing their subjects, symbolisms, and locations is a useful way to chart changes to the Company's ideology of empire in the second half of the eighteenth century. All seven of the neoclassical sculptures manipulated ideological links between classical antiquity and British imperialism, but they did so in different ways. Those from the early 1760s were military in nature, while the commissions from the 1790s stretched beyond the theme of military conquest.

By chronologically examining the seven sculptures that the East India Company commissioned between 1760 and 1799, one gains a sense of how eighteenth-century references to classical discourse changed, both within the corridors of East India House and beyond its walls. Four of the sculptures were installed inside East India House's General Court Room, so would have been viewed by shareholders, merchants, and anyone else who conducted business there. The other three sculptures were displayed in prominent public locations in London. The subjects and symbolisms of these differently located sculptures show how the Company engaged with transformational ideologies of empire which would, in the nineteenth century, become far more expansive.



Before 1760, there were only two commissioned portraits of named individuals inside East India House, neither of whom related to military events. The first portrait was Richard Greenbury's painting on canvas of Naqd Ali Beg from 1627, [Figure 1.3] and the other was the portrait of John Dean by Willem Verelst from 1743. [Figure 1.21] Although they lived more than a century apart, they shared the distinction of being minor celebrities in London through their dealings with the East India Company. Naqd Ali Beg was the exotic Persian trade ambassador who left London in disgrace in 1627, and John Dean was the survivor of a shipwreck who unexpectedly returned to London in 1741. Their dress reflects their social and cultural backgrounds. Naqd Ali Beg stands on a Persian rug, dressed in the luxurious fabrics that Persia traded to the West. John Dean's portrait shows a man dressed in elegant but simple clothing that reflected his status as a comfortable, salaried, working-class employee of the East India Company. Both portraits predate the creation of the East India Company's army in the late 1740s, so they don't allude to Britain's development into an imperial power in the 1750s. The only other portraits of named individuals associated with the East India Company before the mid-eighteenth century were of King Charles I and King Charles II on the triumphal arch at Cornhill Conduit.<sup>4</sup> [Figure 1.6]

Before 1760, the only marble sculpture to be commissioned by the East India Company was John Michael Rysbrack's chimneypiece of "Britannia Receiving Riches from The East". [Figure 1.12] It was commissioned in 1728 for the Directors' Court Room, the secretive, cubical room at the centre of East India House where the Company's directors met. Unlike the sculpture commissions from the latter half of the eighteenth century, which were all portraits of named individuals, the allegorical figures in Rysbrack's composition expressed commercial dominance, not military endeavour.

In mid-eighteenth-century London, there were several public places of entertainment where people could pay to see artworks by contemporary British artists. The subject matter of these works catered to whatever topics held the public's interest at the time. One such topic was reportage of current events, particularly the political, military, and exploration activities of the British in other parts of the world. The events of the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which led to British overseas conquests in both America and Asia, were one such area of fascination. Publicly exhibited paintings and sculptures visualised the written and spoken accounts of these international events. In the 1760s, two artists' societies were formed in London that held annual exhibitions every spring. The Society of Artists of Great Britain held its first public exhibition in 1761, and seven years later, the Royal Academy hosted its own spring show under the patronage of King George III. Another place where the public could see displays of contemporary British art was pleasure parks like the Vauxhall Gardens. A small admission charge allowed entry to green spaces and pavilions where sculptures, paintings, and music performances were all on offer.

The most popular and longest established public exhibition space in London in the eighteenth century was Westminster Abbey. Unlike the emerging exhibition societies of the 1760s, which were open to the public for only a few weeks every spring, and pleasure gardens, which required seasonal good weather to attract visitors, Westminster Abbey was indoors, accessible at most times of the year, and had been a

public attraction since the 1690s.<sup>5</sup> In the eighteenth century its popularity increased as it “became the de facto Valhalla and showcase of British imperial strength until it was overflowing with monuments”.<sup>6</sup> By 1760, the Abbey’s walls and floor were covered in monuments commemorating the lives of famous Britons. The Company’s artistic patronage in the late eighteenth century related to this new trend of expressing Britain’s imperial strength through monumental sculpture in the Abbey.

### The 1760 commissions

In July and September of 1760, the East India Company commissioned Peter Scheemakers to make marble portrait sculptures of Charles Watson, Stringer Lawrence, Robert Clive, and George Pocock. These four men participated in the Company’s military events in South Asia during the 1750s, commanding troops either during the Carnatic Wars in the south, or in the Siege of Calcutta in Bengal, or both. Before looking at the sculpture commissions of 1760, it is important to understand who these men were, and how their roles connected with the East India Company’s military expansion in the 1750s.

The most senior of these four men was Major Stringer Lawrence, who began his military career in the King’s Army at the Battle of Culloden. Before the creation of the East India Company’s army, its only soldiers were guards stationed at the Company’s factories or warehouses at key coastal ports. In September 1746, the French invaded and captured Madras, contesting the authority of the Company’s main trade ally in the south, Muhammad Ali Khan, the Nawab of Arcot. With its trade under threat, the Court of Directors appointed Major Stringer Lawrence in December 1746 to transform the East India Company’s Madras Army.<sup>7</sup> He reached Fort St David, the Company’s temporary base on the Coromandel Coast, in January 1748.<sup>8</sup> During the first battles he commanded in India, Lawrence encountered a young ensign named Robert Clive who became his protégé.<sup>9</sup> By 1751, the Court of Directors made Stringer Lawrence the first Commander-in-Chief of the Company’s forces in the East Indies. He was expected to command military forces not just at Madras, but also in the other Presidencies of Bengal and Bombay, along with any other settlements in the vicinity of these bases.<sup>10</sup> For one man it would have been geographically impossible to implement armies at such distant locations, but with his ability to demand whatever resources he required, Lawrence transformed the Company from a collective of tiny coastal settlements to the emerging conqueror of territories in Madras and Bengal.

On 17 March 1752, Stringer Lawrence left Fort St David, along with Robert Clive, to relieve the fortress-town of Tiruchirappalli. The French had seized control of the town but hadn’t managed to penetrate the Rock Fort at the town’s centre, where the Nawab of Arcot was trapped inside.<sup>11</sup> If the French imprisoned the Nawab, the Company would lose its key ally, and with him, all its trade privileges in the south. With Lawrence in command of the Company’s troops, and a 26-year-old Robert Clive at his side, they took over several inland positions,<sup>12</sup> relieved Tiruchirappalli, captured Muhammad Ali Khan’s French-backed rival, Chanda Sahib, and executed him at Thanjavur.<sup>13</sup> In 1754, there was no precedent for the Company to commission portraits of military heroes, so the Court of Directors unanimously agreed to

commemorate the victory over the French by presenting Stringer Lawrence and Robert Clive with gifts. Lawrence received “a Sword enriched with Diamonds” valued at £750, “to express our grateful sense of his Signal Services to the Company in the Chief Command of their Forces in the Field under the Presidency of Fort St George”. Robert Clive was also honoured with a diamond-covered sword, valued at £500, as a token of esteem for his efforts “upon the Coast of Choromandel”. The swords were made in London and shipped to India, where they were presented to Lawrence and Clive by members of the Company’s Madras Council at Fort St George.<sup>14</sup> When Lawrence finally returned to Britain in August 1759,<sup>15</sup> he was celebrated as the founder of the East India Company’s army, and an architect of their victory over the French in South Asia.

In December 1756, at the age of 31, Robert Clive followed in Stringer Lawrence’s footsteps as the Company’s Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies. When news of the fall of Calcutta reached Madras, he travelled to Bengal alongside Vice Admiral Charles Watson (1714–1757), the Commander of the King’s Navy in the East Indies. In February 1757 Clive and Watson, aided by Eyre Coote (1726–1783), arrived at Calcutta. Siraj ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, was ordered to compensate the British for their losses during the siege, and to re-establish the Company’s trade privileges.<sup>16</sup> He refused all the Company’s demands, prompting Clive to seek redress in a more covert manner. Mir Jafar, a high-ranking commander in Siraj ud-Daulah’s army, agreed to allow the Company’s troops to remove the Nawab in exchange for the throne of Bengal. Through this agreement, the East India Company won the Battle of Plassey on 23 June 1757. Siraj ud-Daula was captured and executed,<sup>17</sup> and Mir Jafar became the next Nawab of Bengal.

The Company’s activities in Bengal were followed by the threat of new French invasions to the south. The French navy destroyed Fort St David in May 1758 and was posturing to invade Madras again in 1759. The Company needed assistance, and although Clive was instructed to return to Madras, he stayed at Fort William, probably because he was preoccupied with increasing his personal fortune in Bengal.<sup>18</sup> In January 1758, the Company’s forces were strengthened when Vice Admiral George Pocock, who replaced Charles Watson as the Royal Navy’s new Commander of Naval Forces in the East Indies,<sup>19</sup> sailed south in September 1759. Pocock defeated the French fleet off the Coromandel Coast, bringing the Carnatic Wars to a close. An account of the naval incursion against the French, authored by Pocock, was published in the *London Gazette* on 30 May 1760.<sup>20</sup> It described how he, with 536 guns and 4,035 men, defeated the French navy’s considerably larger force of 728 guns and 6,400 men. According to Pocock, they blasted “each other with great fury, and continued hotly engaged until ... the enemy’s [defences] began to give way”.<sup>21</sup> In September 1760, when the Company’s shareholders met at a General Court, George Pocock’s naval victory over the French was common knowledge, with the court’s minutes recording that the event “had been so fully communicated to the Publick [by Pocock] ... it was needless to give the Court a further relation”. In the same court minutes, the Company celebrated the signing of a treaty with the Dutch in December 1759.<sup>22</sup> The victory over the French, when connected with the Dutch treaty and the retaking of Calcutta, galvanised the Company’s image as South Asia’s preeminent trade partner.

## The sculptures

In mid-eighteenth century London, Britain's overseas military conquests during the Seven Years' War (1756–63) were a popular topic for contemporary artworks, many of which were displayed to the paying public in venues like the Vauxhall Gardens. These artworks evoked and encouraged new nationalist sentiments in Britain that praised the emergence of an international empire, with London at its centre.<sup>23</sup> The Company's Court of Directors participated in this trend by commissioning artworks that fed into this emerging wave of nationalism. In 1760, the same year that the East India Company commissioned four marble portrait sculptures, Jonathan Tyers, the owner of London's Vauxhall Gardens, commissioned four large paintings by Francis Hayman, each measuring 12 by 15 feet, that celebrated Britain's overseas military exploits in the late 1750s.<sup>24</sup> Hayman's paintings were exhibited inside Vauxhall Gardens' Pillared Saloon, where musicians played popular songs describing the military events in the paintings.<sup>25</sup> By combining music and art, the Pillared Saloon exuded a multisensory vision of Britain's new imperial strength. One of the paintings, titled "Robert Clive receiving the Homage of the Nabob", dramatised the events after the Battle of Plassey in 1757.<sup>26</sup> Robert Clive is theatrically shown as a young man with his arms spread wide, facing Mir Jafar, the Mughal commander who was about to become the Nawab of Bengal. Hayman's painting sentimentalised a popular political event that, along with the other three paintings in the Pillared Hall, played upon a cocktail of famous moments, making Robert Clive a household name.<sup>27</sup>

In the same year that Hayman painted the four pictures for the Vauxhall Gardens, the East India Company's Court of Directors, having not commissioned any artworks for 19 years,<sup>28</sup> instructed Peter Scheemakers (1691–1781) to make "at the Company's charge in Westminster Abbey" a memorial to Vice Admiral Charles Watson.<sup>29</sup> In late 1759, the Company asked Prime Minister William Pitt's permission to install a monument to Watson in Westminster Abbey.<sup>30</sup> Scheemakers completed it in 1763, making it the first of the Company's neoclassical portrait sculptures. Westminster Abbey was already famous for its tombs to Britain's monarchs, particularly those of the Tudors, near the altar. By the mid-eighteenth century, the Abbey was swollen with monuments to the newly dead, along with numerous posthumous memorials in honour of famous men of the past such as William Shakespeare. Alexander Pope, the eighteenth-century poet and satirist, petitioned for all the non-Royal parts of the Abbey to be opened to memorials commemorating men of merit.<sup>31</sup> Westminster Abbey was comparable to a museum or art gallery where the public paid guides to show them the monuments, along with some unusual, miscellaneous objects of curiosity such as coffins, armour, and wax effigies.<sup>32</sup> It was a place where anyone could gaze upon memorials dedicated to great people and solemnly contemplate the levelling power of death.<sup>33</sup> Through the Watson memorial, the East India Company was participating in the British public's engagement with Westminster Abbey. Watson was, according to the Company, a key architect of its military success in India, who reportedly stood beside Robert Clive after the Battle of Plassey while Mir Jaffar signed the treaty that secured the Company's trade position in Bengal.<sup>34</sup> Watson died a few weeks after the treaty was signed.<sup>35</sup>

Like many of Westminster Abbey's eighteenth-century monuments, Charles Watson's memorial was a dramatic composition that visualised his life's achievements.



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Figure 3.1. Robert Clive and Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey, 1757 by Francis Hayman, c. 1760. National Portrait Gallery, 5263. © National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 3.2. Memorial to Charles Watson in Westminster Abbey by Peter Scheemakers, 1763. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster.



Placed inside three arches of a high arcade in the Abbey's north transept, the memorial's triptych composition was divided by two columns. At its centre is the sculpture of Charles Watson, the monument's only standing figure, dressed in a toga and holding in his right hand a palm branch symbolising peace and victory. The human figures under the arches on either side of him symbolise key moments of his career. On the right is a kneeling woman, raising her right hand in Watson's direction, with "Calcutta Freed" inscribed below her to represent the retaking of the city in January 1757. On the left is a chained, naked man, staring angrily downward, with his back turned to Watson. Below him is inscribed, "Ghereah Taken". He represents one of the inhabitants of Gheria, a community south of Bombay that allegedly committed piracy against the Company's ships. In February 1756, while conveying five ship loads of troops along the Malabar Coast, Watson and Clive stopped at Vijaydurg, where the Gheria community was based, and destroyed them by bombarding and plundering their settlement.<sup>36</sup> The memorial in Westminster Abbey, "the most public indoor space in eighteenth-century Britain",<sup>37</sup> shows Watson standing tall between the chained pirate and the genuflecting woman, providing popular narratives of his accomplishments.

An account of the unveiling of Watson's memorial on Saturday 18 June 1763 describes the central sculpture as holding "a branch of olive in his right hand, looking towards a beautiful figure of a woman in a kneeling posture, returning thanks for her safe deliverance from imprisonment in the Black Hole".<sup>38</sup> The Black Hole incident would have been well known to Westminster Abbey's visitors. Another account, dated 1772, tells us that

Westminster-abbey receives every day new monuments of the successes of England in the last war ... [but unlike these others,] The conqueror of the Indies is to be seen there in all the pride of Asiatic pomp and magnificence. His [Watson's] statue, which stands erect, has, on each side of it, a lofty palm-tree, loaded with the trophies and spoils of the vanquished.<sup>39</sup>

The Watson memorial presented the Company as a benevolent power in a land where savages and tyrants threatened the liberty of its people. It celebrated Watson's military actions, but ultimately, it projected the East India Company as a paragon of Western civility, when in reality, it was motivated by violence and military expansion.

There was another provocative rationale behind the Company's commemoration of Watson in Westminster Abbey. From the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, North African pirates known as Barbary corsairs had been capturing and enslaving British and other European peoples. The most terrifying threat to British seamen, "the instruments of Britain's overseas commerce", was being captured by these North African pirates.<sup>40</sup> The plight of Britons enslaved by Barbary corsairs was a source of anger and fear that fuelled prejudices against non-Christian, non-white foreigners. In the early 1760s, the people who saw Admiral Watson's memorial in Westminster Abbey would have identified the cowering, shackled, foreign-looking man as someone who enslaved and killed British men and women. The alleged pirates of Gheria weren't Barbary corsairs, but those who saw the memorial in the 1760s wouldn't have made this distinction. The Court of Directors described Watson's acts as a success "derived to the Nation in general and the Company in particular",<sup>41</sup> suggesting that

he contributed not just to the Company's success, but also to contemporary British causes, and the rise of imperialism. Watson's monument, the first sculpture that the Company commissioned for Westminster Abbey, was a conspicuous public act of patronage that referred to identifiable public issues.

After the Company agreed to fund the Watson memorial in Westminster Abbey, Peter Scheemakers received orders to make three more portrait sculptures. The statues of Robert Clive, Stringer Lawrence, and George Pocock were installed inside the General Court Room of East India House in 1764. Instead of wearing togas, these living personages were sculpted in the uniforms of Imperial Roman generals. The commission was agreed upon at a meeting of the Company's General Court on 24 September 1760, eight weeks after the Watson commission was approved for Westminster Abbey. In the Company's Court Minutes, it was "resolved unanimously [by the Company's shareholders] that the thanks for this court be given to Vice Admiral Pocock, Colonel Robert Clive and Colonel Stringer Lawrence for their many eminent and signal services to this Company" and that their sculptures should be placed "in some conspicuous parts of this House".<sup>42</sup> The statues were placed inside three niches in East India House's General Court Room. George Pocock's sculpture was placed in the middle, west-facing niche, Clive's was positioned on Pocock's left, and Lawrence's sculpture was on the right.<sup>43</sup> Imperial Rome became a model for the East India Company's conquests, with their costuming as a bold reference to the spread of the Roman Empire, which extended across distant territories and controlled millions of foreign subjects through a disciplined army.

Whilst it was not a public place like Westminster Abbey, the General Court Room of East India House was the largest, most public area of East India House in the late eighteenth century. It was where the Company's shareholders, known as "proprietors", attended quarterly meetings. The only requirement to attend these meetings was ownership of enough East India Company stock, and anyone, irrespective of race, nationality, or gender, could buy shares for the simple reason that the Company would take anyone's money. The General Court Room was also the Company's Sale Room until the late 1790s, where goods were sold by auction, giving the room another semi-public function. The presence of the statues of Clive, Lawrence, and Pocock, immortalised in marble inside the room's high niches, was a reminder to the "howling and yelling" bidders below of how the Company's mercantile dominance was achieved.<sup>44</sup>

The Roman military costuming of the Clive, Lawrence, and Pocock statues was typical of Peter Scheemakers's work. In the late 1720s he lived and studied in Rome for two years, and the influence of this period is visible in these commissions. Robert Clive's statue resembles a sculpture of Julius Caesar from Trajan's Forum in Rome, dating to the early second century.<sup>45</sup> Clive's costume and body position seem to be modelled after either this or a similar ancient Roman sculpture, positioning the right arm at the side, the left arm raised and bent at the elbow, and the right foot stepping forward. Both wear capes pinned with a rosette brooch in the same place, and aside from a few decorative adjustments, their costumes are the same, right down to their sandals. The differences between the Roman sculpture of Julius Caesar and the Scheemakers statue are in the positioning of the sword in Clive's right hand, the Medusa shield by his feet, and the incongruously displayed Order of the Bath medal hanging from a ribbon around Clive's neck. The sculptures of Stringer Lawrence and

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*Figure 3.3.* Robert Clive in Roman dress by Peter Scheemakers, 1764. British Library, Foster 53. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 3.4.* George Pocock in Roman dress by Peter Scheemakers, 1764. British Library, Foster 573. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 3.5.* Stringer Lawrence in Roman dress by Peter Scheemakers, 1764. British Library, Foster 54. Photograph by the author.





Figure 3.6. A sale inside the General Court Room of East India House. Print after Thomas Rowlandson, 1808. British Library, P1571. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

George Pocock are in the same style of dress, with capes over their shoulders, segmented skirts, breastplates, and sandals. Lawrence has a helmet and a quiver of arrows by his feet, and, like Clive, holds a sword in his right hand. Perhaps the swords held by Clive and Lawrence relate to their victory at Tiruchirappalli, when the Company presented them with diamond-encrusted swords. Because George Pocock was in the King's Navy, his right hand rests on a ship's prow. Like Clive, Pocock is wearing the medal of the Order of the Bath around his neck.

The sculptures the Company commissioned in the 1770s and 1780s didn't show their subjects in classical dress. The first of these, completed in 1777, was a memorial by William Tyler dedicated to Stringer Lawrence for Westminster Abbey. [Figure 4.3] The other two, both completed by Thomas Banks in 1788, were in memory of Eyre Coote, who died at Madras in 1783. One was a statute for the General Court Room, and the other was a memorial for Westminster Abbey. [Figures 4.7 and 4.8] This

movement away from neoclassical costuming reflected the fashion set by the Royal Academy to show sitters in contemporary dress.<sup>46</sup> Other reasons for the abandonment of neoclassical costuming may connect to the Company's tarnished image. Unlike the early 1760s, when the Company basked in a positive image, its reputation collapsed in the early 1770s. The hubris of the 1760s commissions was no longer appropriate in the 1770s and 1780s.

### The 1790s commissions

In the 1790s, the East India Company once again began to commission sculptures of men in neoclassical dress. Following the loss of America in 1781, India became the new cornerstone of the British Empire, making the Company's activities in South Asia important to the country's imperial identity. Whilst it was still a mercantile company, the Company's national importance now lay in it being an imperial power that ruled over millions of subjects in another part of the world.

Between the 1730s and 1790, the Company commemorated its expansion by placing artworks inside East India House. These internal embellishments expressed its growth and progress, as endorsed by its directors. By the 1790s, with India at the centre of Britain's imperial consciousness, it was decided to enlarge the building with a new Palladian façade that framed the building's main entrance on Leadenhall Street, exteriorising its elevated role. The new façade was topped by a sculpted tympanum by John Bacon the Elder (1740–1799), featuring a figure of King George III at its centre. The Company commissioned Bacon to create two other sculptures that decade. One was of Charles Cornwallis for the General Court Room, and the other was a memorial dedicated to Sir William Jones for St Paul's Cathedral. All three showed their subjects in classical dress, yet there is little connection between John Bacon's sculptures and the four statues by Scheemakers from the 1760s. Instead of being overt expressions of military expansion, the men in the 1790s sculptures represent new aspects of the Company's identity that didn't exist three decades earlier.

The first sculpture by Bacon, commissioned in 1793, was the statue of Charles Cornwallis, one of Britain's most celebrated imperialists in the late eighteenth century and the man attributed with founding the East India Company's civil service. Dressed in the same Roman military attire as the Scheemakers statues, the Cornwallis sculpture was placed in East India House's General Court Room in 1798 to commemorate his return to Britain after serving as Governor General at Calcutta for seven years. He was welcomed back as a hero, having implemented numerous reforms to the Company's establishment in South Asia to rectify widespread corruption.

Cornwallis was the Company's third Governor General, and the first man to be appointed to this role with no previous connection to India. He fought in the American War of Independence, and surrendered Yorktown on October 19, 1781. Britain overcame this humiliating defeat, which resulted in the loss of the "First British Empire", by expanding its overseas claims on other continents. Five years after the Surrender of Yorktown, Cornwallis was installed by Britain's Parliament as the East India Company's Governor General at Fort William. His was one of many appointments in India to high-ranking soldiers who served Britain in America.<sup>47</sup> These appointments, under the government of William Pitt the Younger, were a huge shift to the

Company's operations. Before the loss of America, the Company appointed governors general who were insiders and had already served the Company in other capacities. By commissioning Cornwallis's sculpture for the General Courtroom in 1793, the Court of Directors praised and acknowledged Parliament's interference in the East India Company's affairs.

One of Cornwallis's duties as Governor General was to reform the Company's operations in South Asia.<sup>48</sup> He set up a system of land reforms known as the Permanent Settlement that identified landowners who would pay taxes to the Company.<sup>49</sup> To Britain's public, Charles Cornwallis was more famous for the defeat of Tipu Sultan in 1792, which brought the Third Mysore War to an end. Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore Kingdom, was reported in Britain as a tyrant, as were the French, who had backed Tipu's military campaigns against the East India Company. Cornwallis's conquest at Mysore made him the vanquisher of the French in India and of Tipu Sultan. To further augment British feelings of moral superiority, Tipu Sultan was forced to hand over two of his young sons, Abdul Khalik and Muizuddeen, to Charles Cornwallis as hostages. This moment was celebrated as an act of charity, with the East India Company claiming to offer the boys a new start away from their despotic father, under the guidance of new British masters. The scene was commemorated in numerous paintings and prints.<sup>50</sup> Two British artists who lived in India, Robert Home and A.W. Devis, both portrayed the dramatic moment when Cornwallis met the two little boys and escorted them from the oriental trappings of their childhood to a new life. Robert Home's painting was completed in 1795 and shipped from India to England for display at the Royal Academy.<sup>51</sup> The scene's popularity made it the subject of other paintings by Mather Brown and Henry Singleton, which were produced as prints for popular distribution.<sup>52</sup> The handover of Tipu's sons to Cornwallis even inspired a play titled "The Pantomime Story of Tippoo Sultan Sahib", which was performed at Sadlers Wells Theatre in London in 1794.<sup>53</sup>

Cornwallis's work as an administrator, and his image as a man of honour who brought British values to India, were described in the Company's Court Minutes on 23 January 1793, when it announced that "his statue [would] be placed in this Court Room", because he "displayed uncommon zeal and ability in the management of the Affairs of the East India Company ... particularly in conducting the late War with Tippoo Sultaun".<sup>54</sup> On 10 and 17 June 1794, John Bacon sent two drawings to the Court of Directors of designs for the Cornwallis sculpture.<sup>55</sup> The chosen design showed Cornwallis in Roman costume. It was completed in 1798 and exhibited in the artist's studio before installation in East India House. An account published in March 1798 tells us that, "Mr. Bacon has nearly finished a very fine Statue of Marquis Cornwallis ... There is a dignity in the figure that fully indicates a Character destined for high achievements. The whole is an honor to British Genius".<sup>56</sup> The sculpture's fame even spread to India, and a copy of it, paid for by the citizens of Calcutta, was sculpted by John Bacon's son, and sent to Calcutta in 1803.<sup>57</sup>

The Cornwallis sculpture shows him in similar attire to the Scheemakers statues, but Bacon's Cornwallis statue differs in some significant ways. The objects surrounding Cornwallis, a cornucopia, an olive branch, and a downward pointing sword, represent bountifulness and peace. Although Cornwallis came from a military background, and took part in the Third Mysore War, the Company was honouring him as



*Figure 3.7.* Charles Cornwallis in Roman dress by John Bacon, 1798. British Library, Foster 243. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



an administrator and a statesman. By commissioning the statue and placing it in the General Court Room of East India House, the Company was showing its compliance with Parliament, which was responsible for Cornwallis becoming Governor General.

The next Bacon commission for East India House was the sculpted tympanum for the building's new façade. Designed in the 1790s, the building's new entrance was 200 feet long by 60 feet high. To enlarge the building's footprint, the Company purchased and demolished the houses at the corner of Leadenhall Street and Lime Street.<sup>58</sup> John Bacon's sculpted tympanum, completed in January 1798, crowned this new façade.<sup>59</sup> It was packed with allegorical figures and objects that indicated the geographical spread of the East India Company's activities. Old Man Thames reclined at the right side of the composition, and at the left side, the Ganges, personified as a beautiful young woman, struck a similar pose. The two rivers at either end of the tympanum symbolised the breadth of the Company's operations, while at its highest point in the centre, King George III stood, dressed in Roman military costume, with a laurel wreath on his head. He was the largest, and also the only, non-allegorical figure in the composition.



Figure 3.8. Façade of East India House after a drawing by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, 1817. British Library, P1389. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



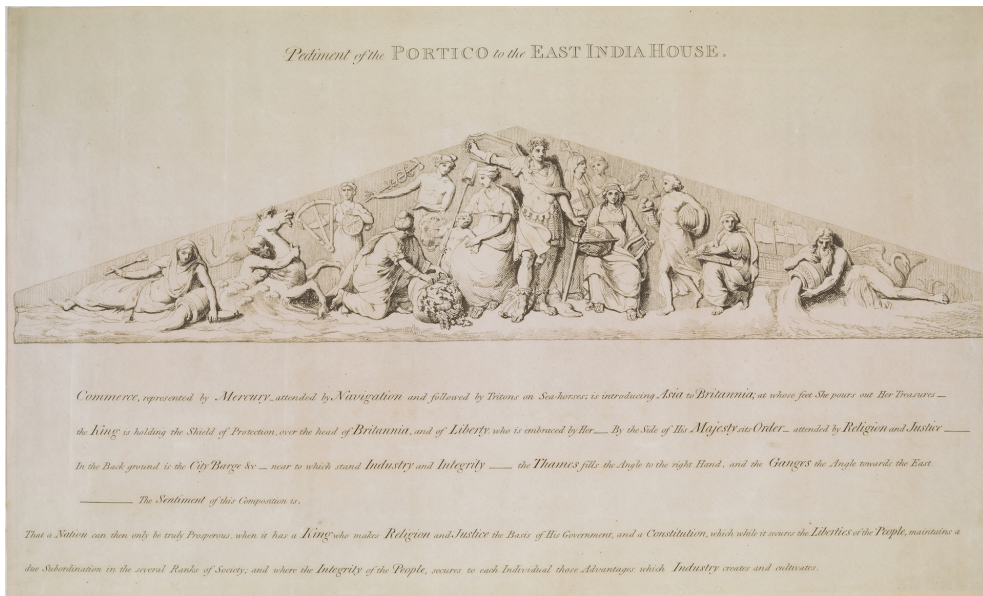


Figure 3.9. John Bacon's sculpted tympanum on the façade of East India House, 1798. British Library, P2203. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Like the Cornwallis statue inside the General Courtroom, the figure of King George III at the tympanum's centre held a sword with its tip pointed downwards in his left hand, and there was a cornucopia by his feet. Instead of holding an olive branch in his right hand, the King held a shield protectively over Britannia, who was seated next to him. A turbaned man who represented "The East" knelt before Britannia, offering the cornucopia to both her and the king. Bacon's monumental tympanum on East India House's façade was celebrated as a great artistic achievement, with the central sculpture of George III described as wearing "Roman dress [to] dignify a living character".<sup>60</sup> King George III and Britannia were the two most recognisable images in Britain at that time. Both were pictured on either side of the new "cartwheel" penny minted in London in 1797, a year before the tympanum was completed. Through this new coinage, the first ever to feature a portrait of Britannia, anyone walking the streets of London in 1798, regardless of age, gender, or status, would recognise the two main figures at the top of East India House's façade.

On 29 March 1798, two months after the tympanum's completion, the Court of Directors paid John Bacon £1000 for his work on the exterior of East India House.<sup>61</sup> In that same year, the Cornwallis sculpture was installed inside East India House's General Court Room. Richard Jupp, the architect who oversaw the renovations to East India House, exhibited two drawings of the new façade at the Royal Academy. The drawings were titled "Design for the new front of East India House" and "Design for the tympanum of the pediment of the front of the East India House". Although the first drawing was Henry Holland's design for the building, and the second drawing

showed Bacon's sculpted pediment, both drawings were exhibited under Jupp's name.<sup>62</sup> The print based on the drawing, labelled with the meanings of the sculpted figures, is all that is left of Bacon's tympanum, which was demolished, along with the rest of East India House, by 1862.

Behind East India House's new façade, inside its freshly constructed second floor rooms, was the Oriental Repository, the Company's new library and reading room that provided London with its first dedicated meeting place for Orientalist scholars. While it was being built, Sir William Jones (1746–1794), the prominent Orientalist scholar, died at Calcutta. On 12 April 1796, the Court of Directors "resolved unanimously" that John Bacon should sculpt a memorial in honour of Sir William Jones,<sup>63</sup> which was placed inside St Paul's Cathedral in 1799. It shows Jones dressed in a toga resembling the costuming of Charles Watson's memorial by Peter Scheemakers in Westminster Abbey. However, it honoured him for his intellectual achievements, making it completely different from the neoclassical statues of war heroes from the early 1760s.

Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral, completed in 1710, replaced the old cathedral that was lost in the Great Fire of 1666. Wren designed the cathedral floor as an open space, and before the 1790s, memorials were only located in the crypt. The cathedral floor's appearance, for most of the eighteenth century, presented the visitor with a clean, elegant Protestant ethos that intentionally differed from the ornate interiors of Catholic cathedrals. The ban on placing monuments on the main floor of St Paul's Cathedral was lifted in the 1790s, when Parliament, in response to Westminster Abbey being overcrowded, demanded that Wren's cathedral be used to commemorate Britain's heroes of empire.

Bacon's sculpture of Jones was one of the first monuments to be placed on the floor of St Paul's Cathedral. It was positioned at the prestigious crossing below Christopher Wren's dome. In this location, a set of memorials, known as the "first four", were placed between 1796 and 1814. In 1796, the same year that the Company commissioned the statue of William Jones, John Bacon had already completed and installed two of the other "first four" memorials, dedicated to John Howard, the prison reformer and philanthropist, and to Samuel Johnson, the famous poet, scholar, and lexicographer.<sup>64</sup> John Howard's memorial is at the south-east side of the crossing, and Samuel Johnson's is at its north-east end, facing the spot where Jones's memorial, at the south-west end, was placed in 1799. William Jones and Samuel Johnson were both scholars of language and literature, with Jones serving as President of Johnson's Literary Society in 1780.<sup>65</sup> The last of the "first four" memorials to be placed at the crossing was installed in 1813, and is dedicated to Joshua Reynolds, the artist who founded the Royal Academy. John Bacon died in 1799, so the Reynolds memorial was sculpted by John Flaxman. The positioning of the "first four" memorials at the cathedral's centre was an important act of resistance for the Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral. Unlike the rest of the floor, which rapidly filled up with memorials to military heroes, the Chapter controlled what was placed directly below the dome, intentionally dedicating the cathedral's most potent location to men of knowledge who were regarded as benefactors of the British people.

Of the four men memorialised at the crossing below the dome, William Jones was, and still is, the least recognised. His achievements occurred overseas, and he wasn't a



*Figure 3.10.* Memorial to William Jones by John Bacon, 1799, St Paul's Cathedral. Photograph by the author.

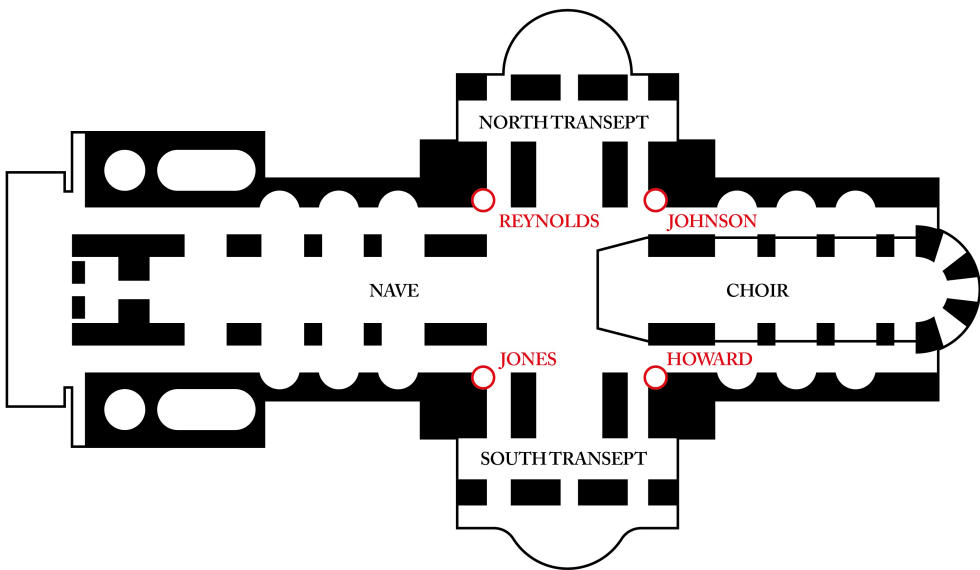


Figure 3.11. Floor plan of St Paul's Cathedral showing the locations of the "First Four" memorials. ©Nick Beresford-Davies. [www.tinstar.co.uk](http://www.tinstar.co.uk)

household name in 1796 when the memorial was commissioned. For the East India Company, the statue of Jones was an opportunity to promulgate an aspect of its establishment that was connected to an intellectual contribution to society. It also shows that in the 1790s the Company was powerful enough to arrange for one of its servants to be memorialised in such a potent location. The popularity of Jones's Orientalist scholarship is sometimes seen as a nineteenth-century phenomenon, with some believing it was implausible that the Company "should so willingly have extended its largesse to so esoteric a cause as Jones's oriental project".<sup>66</sup> However, his memorial in the centre of St Paul's Cathedral shows that the East India Company seized the opportunity to publicise his intellectual achievements in the 1790s.

The white marble memorial features Jones dressed in a toga, standing atop a pediment. It contains non-Christian images that allude to the scholarship Jones was credited with through the East India Company's support. In his right hand he holds a scroll labelled "PLAN OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY", the institution in Calcutta that he co-founded. In his left hand he holds a quill, and leans against a copy of his book, "The Institutes of Hindu Law". The book rests on top of a podium that is decorated with a vertical panel sculpted with symbols of his education and career before his arrival in India. The topmost symbol is a book and quill. Below are the scales and sword of Astraea, the blindfolded personification of Justice. Next down are navigational instruments, and at the base, there is a lyre. These symbols allude to the Classical Western education that Jones received at University College Oxford in the mid-1760s, and his subsequent career as a barrister in London before his journey to India in 1783.



The left side of the plinth is inscribed, "THIS STATUE WAS ERECTED / BY THE HONBLE EAST-INDIA COMPANY/ IN TESTIMONY OF THEIR GRATEFUL SENSE OF HIS PUBLIC SERVICES, THEIR ADMIRATION OF HIS GENIUS AND LEARNING, AND THEIR RESPECT FOR HIS CHARACTER AND VIRTUES". On the front of the plinth is a sculpted relief with three distinctly Indian images inside a roundel. At the centre is a young woman dressed in a sari, flanked by Brahma on her right, and the Kurma Avatar of Vishnu on her left. These three images were references to Jones's interest in Indian languages and culture. The East India Company was associating itself with William Jones's intellectual contribution to Britain, which aligned the classics with the languages and cultures of the subcontinent. To place this memorial at the centre of Britain's national cathedral, and to be one of the first memorials to be placed inside of it, was a huge achievement for the East India Company.<sup>67</sup>

The female figure inside the roundel, the personification of the Ganges, is flanked by images that John Bacon would have copied. The Kurma Avatar of Vishnu on the right is set inside a square border, suggesting it was copied from a miniature painting. In late-eighteenth-century Britain, there were numerous collectors of Indian miniature paintings in London.<sup>68</sup> As for the image of Brahma on the left side of the personified Ganges, it is an exact copy of a small zinc sculpture that was collected by Charles Wilkins, another important Orientalist scholar. Along with at least 11 other small zinc figurines, it was "cast at Benares under the superintendence of Mr. Wilkins and some Pandits" in 1784, while Wilkins was studying Sanskrit at Varanasi under the tutelage of Kasinatha Bhattacharya.<sup>69</sup> When Charles Wilkins returned to England, he brought back these zinc sculptures and gave them to the East India Company. They were deposited in the Oriental Repository, the combined museum and library of East India House, and are today in the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>70</sup>

Charles Wilkins and William Jones knew each other, and most likely met in 1783, when Jones arrived in Calcutta to serve as a judge on the Bengal Supreme Court. Wilkins had already been in India for over a decade and encouraged Jones to pursue the study of Sanskrit, putting him in contact with his teacher, Kasinatha Bhattacharya, at Varanasi.<sup>71</sup> In 1784 Jones established the Asiatic Society, which Wilkins served on as a founding member. When Wilkins returned to Britain for health reasons in 1785, the two men stayed in contact, sending letters to each other devoted to philological matters.<sup>72</sup>

On 18 February 1801, Charles Wilkins was appointed by the Company's Committee of Correspondence as the Oriental Repository's first librarian.<sup>73</sup> His private office, and the reading room he oversaw, were both set directly behind the building's new neoclassical façade on Leadenhall Street, with its high windows immediately below and behind Bacon's sculpted tympanum.<sup>74</sup> Dedicated to the preservation and study of India's languages, cultures, cartography, and natural history, the Oriental Repository made East India House into a place of learning as well as a place of business. Its reading room opened in December 1801,<sup>75</sup> and an adjacent gallery room, where objects were displayed, opened in 1809. Jones's Orientalist research was challenging for its day, claiming that South Asia was the cradle of an ancient civilisation that was cognate with those of classical Europe.<sup>76</sup> His work opened the way for scholarly research on Asian languages and cultures in the west, with the Oriental Repository inside East India House providing a dedicated meeting place for these scholars.



*Figure 3.12.* Roundel on the front of the plinth, William Jones's memorial, St Paul's Cathedral. Photograph by the author.



*Figure 3.13.* Detail from William Jones's memorial by John Bacon showing the Kurma Avatar of Vishnu, 1799. St Paul's Cathedral. Photograph by the author.





*Figure 3.14.* Detail from William Jones's memorial by John Bacon showing Brahma, 1799. St Paul's Cathedral. Photograph by the author.





*Figure 3.15.* Zinc figurine of Brahma given to the East India Company by Charles Wilkins. V&A, 912(IS). © Victoria and Albert Museum London.

In William Jones’s writings, he compared Greece with India, and placed himself as the “interlocutor” who conveyed India’s ancient wisdom to the British. In the words of Phiroze Vasunia, Jones saw

Greece, like India, as a colonial space occupied by the English and over which English-administered courts had jurisdiction. The fulcrum around which this little fable turned was the person of the English judge, a man both interpreter and interlocutor, and the “inquisitive” individual to whom Greeks and Indians would convey the ancient wisdom of their cultures. Jones thus placed himself at the centre of a little Anglo-Indo-Hellenic fantasy.<sup>77</sup>

The use of Wilkins’s zinc image of Brahma as a model for part of the Jones memorial shows that in the early 1790s, before his appointment as the Company’s first librarian, Wilkins was an important presence within East India House, and his appointment as librarian was an extension of Jones’s work. The reading room, located directly behind East India House’s façade, was where numerous classically inspired scholars fed off the principles of Sir William Jones’s scholarship. Comparison between British India and the empires of Greece and Rome was linked within East India House. Jones’s catalysing influence, as represented at the very centre of St Paul’s Cathedral, unleashed

the “tangle of imperial ideas rooted in classical discourse” that would characterise the culture of British imperialism.<sup>78</sup>

The Bacon sculpture of William Jones was also connected with the legacy of Warren Hastings. The memorial for St Paul’s Cathedral was commissioned in April 1796, exactly one year after Warren Hastings, the Company’s first Governor General, was acquitted of corruption charges in London. Installed in 1799, the Jones memorial obliquely celebrated the achievements of Warren Hastings, who saw the conciliation of “native sensibilities” as the key to the Company’s successful governance of India, hence his patronage of scholars such as Charles Wilkins and William Jones.<sup>79</sup> Because Hastings’s public reputation was tarnished by his high-profile, seven-year-long impeachment trial in London, it was unfeasible for the East India Company to celebrate his achievements in the 1790s.<sup>80</sup> However, Sir William Jones’s work was a product of the policies Hastings implemented in India, making the Jones memorial a safe way for the Company to praise Hastings’s patronage of eighteenth-century Orientalist scholarship.

The statue of William Jones in St Paul’s Cathedral connected the East India Company with scholarly assiduousness. It was a statement about the original, progressive work that the British were conducting in India. By commissioning this statue, the East India Company was unpacking a new, non-military image of its actions that compared its work in India to the pursuits of John Howard and Samuel Johnson. By placing Jones’s memorial alongside these giants, the Company connected him with a grand British civilising mission. By the early nineteenth century, there was a new, unassailable belief that Britain was making India into a better place, and that British people were endowed with a special imperial character that made them India’s saviours.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

In the second half of the eighteenth century there were numerous thematic changes to the Company’s commissioned artworks. The seven sculptures considered here, all of which were commissioned by the Company in the neoclassical style, represent some of these changes. As a genre, neoclassical sculpture connected contemporary subjects with the traditions of Western antiquity. The sculptures from the 1760s showed a different reality from those commissioned in the 1790s. These differences highlight how much the Company’s identity changed in three decades. Those from the 1760s commemorated military exploits in the years immediately after the Battle of Plassey. By contrast, the three neoclassical sculptures commissioned in the 1790s were about the Company’s new relationship with Parliament, precluding its new direction in the nineteenth century as an administrative entity. The statue of Charles Cornwallis declared the Company’s support for Parliament. The statue of King George III expressed Britain’s need to connect the Company’s imperialist achievements with the nation’s overseas empire. The memorial to William Jones posited Orientalist scholarship as a great intellectual achievement.

In the nineteenth century the Company’s fashion for commissioning neoclassical statues stopped, but its actions as an imperialist power would increasingly draw upon classical knowledge. Instead of making marble statues of men in classical dress, other

methods were adopted to instruct and inspire the British about its overseas empire. Comparisons between Britain's and Rome's empires reached their zenith in the late nineteenth century, after the East India Company's demise, with the classics becoming part of British imperial thought.<sup>82</sup> By the time Charles Merivale, a classicist who went to Haileybury before studying at St John's College Cambridge, was writing about the Roman Empire, Britain had scripted its role as a civilising, benevolent force for good. It is no coincidence that in the early 1860s, when Merivale was enthusiastically writing about the construction of roads, harbours, aqueducts, and bridges throughout Rome's empire,<sup>83</sup> the British were building railway lines and harbours in India. It was convenient for Britain's ruling classes to conflate its empire with this benevolent praise for the Roman Empire's infrastructure. The work of classicists like Merivale justified Britain's imperialist agenda in India and normalised the comparative study of empire.<sup>84</sup>

### Notes

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- 2 Javed Majeed, "Comparativism and References to Rome in British imperial attitudes to India", in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, ed. C. Edwards (Cambridge: University Press, 1999).
- 3 This is the starting point for Hagerman's *Britain's Imperial Muse*.
- 4 John Ogilby, *The Entertainment of His Most Excellent Majestie Charles II, in His Passage through the City of London to his Coronation* (London: Mariot and Dring, 1662), 43.
- 5 Westminster Abbey's admission charge from the 1690s onwards is described in Christopher Wilson, *Westminster Abbey* (London: Bell & Hyman, 1986), 145.
- 6 Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth-Century British Empire* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 4.
- 7 John Biddulph, *Stringer Lawrence: The Father of the Indian Army* (London: Murray, 1901), 18.
- 8 Fort St David was demolished by the French ten years later. It stood at the site of Cuddalore.
- 9 George Harcourt, *Regimental Records of the First Battalion the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 1644–1842* (London: Hugh Rees, 1910), 7.
- 10 Minutes of the Court of Directors, 21 August 1751. BL, IOR/H/24, 99–100.
- 11 Robert Orme, *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan* (London: John Nourse, 1773, 1778), vol. 1, 213; F.R. Hemingway, *Madras District Gazetteers: Trichinopoly* (Chennai: Government Press, 1907), 64.
- 12 For Lawrence's detailed account of these events, see "Colonel Lawrence's Narrative of the War ..." in Robert Owen Cambridge, *An Account of the War in India between the English and French, From the Year 1750 to the Year 1760* (London: T. Jefferys, 1762).
- 13 Orme, *Military Transactions*, vol. 1, 241.
- 14 Letter from London to Fort St George, 15 February 1754. BL, IOR/E/4/861, 145–146.
- 15 Court Minutes, August 1759. BL, IOR/B/76, 52.
- 16 *London Gazette*, 17 September 1757, issue 9723, 2.
- 17 The executioner was reported to have been Mir Jafar's son. George Pocock, account of "Surajud Daulah's" capture and execution, and Mir Jafar's placement on Bengal's throne. *London Gazette*, issue 9765 (11–14 February 1758), 2.
- 18 Gerald Bryant, *The Emergence of British Power in India 1600–1784* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013), 156.
- 19 Charles Watson died in August 1757, and Pocock was appointed as his successor in January 1758.

- 20 George Pocock, account of the “Engagement with the French Fleet on the Coast of Choromandel in September last” dated 12 October 1759, *London Gazette*, issue 10004 (May 27 to May 31 1760), 1–2.
- 21 Pocock, “Engagement with the French”, 1–2.
- 22 Court Minutes, 1760. BL, IOR/B/76, 176.
- 23 Fordham, *British Art*, 20, 103–105.
- 24 Hayman was a founding member of the Society of Artists in 1761 and the Royal Academy in 1768.
- 25 David Coke and Alan Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 136.
- 26 David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 191–3.
- 27 Coke and Borg, *Vauxhall Gardens*, 127–137.
- 28 These were the portraits of John Dean commissioned in 1741. See chapter 1, figure 1.21.
- 29 Court Minutes, 1760. BL, IOR/B/76, 126.
- 30 Coutu, *Persuasion*, 140.
- 31 David Bindman and Malcolm Baker, *Roubiliac and the Eighteenth-Century Monument: Sculpture as Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 18.
- 32 David Cannadine, *Westminster Abbey: A Church in History* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), 247–8, 253–4.
- 33 Bindman and Baker, *Roubiliac*, 9–23”.
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- 35 Watson was buried in St John’s Churchyard Calcutta on 17 August 1757.
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- 37 Coutu, *Persuasion*, 116.
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- 40 Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850* (London: Random House, 2003), 54.
- 41 Court Minutes, 30 July 1760. BL, IOR/B/76, 126.
- 42 Meeting of the General Court, 24 September 1760. BL – IOR/B/76, 176–177.
- 43 Court Minutes, 25 July 1764. BL – IOR/B/80, f. 146
- 44 William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London: John Lane, 1924), footnote, 140–141.
- 45 This sculpture is now in Rome’s Palazzo Senetario.
- 46 Sarah Burnage, “Commemorating Cornwallis: Sculpture in India 1792–1813”, *Visual Culture in Britain* 11, no. 2 (July 2010): 179–80.
- 47 Chaim Rosenberg, *Losing America, Conquering India: Lord Cornwallis and the Remaking of the British Empire* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2017), 3–4, 121–123.
- 48 Peter Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead. Eastern India 1740–1828* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), 101; Rosenberg, *Losing America*, 121.
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- 72 Jones’s letters to Wilkins are in the British Library. BL, Mss Eur C274.
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## 4

# SCANDALS

In Georgian London, politics and art often combined as satire to express public grievances with authority. Many of the East India Company's most famous artworks in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were direct reactions to vicious critiques of its corporate image. Studies of the Company's paintings and sculptures have traditionally been viewed at face value as representations of people and historical moments that exude positivity, victory, and strength. If one considers the contemporary circumstances that surrounded the creation and acquisition of these artworks, one can spot conspicuous alterations to the Company's collection practices that were responses to scandals. The purpose of this chapter is to show how the scandals and debates that affected the East India Company's reputation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries influenced the kinds of artworks it commissioned and acquired. Besides commissioning objects, between 1760 and the 1820s, the East India Company accepted artworks as gifts and bequests. The most famous scandals of this period were those connected with the lives of Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, but there were other parliamentary debates and moments of increased political tension that affected the Company's image.

### Robert Clive's downfall

One of the first portraits to be commissioned by the East India Company was the marble statue of Robert Clive dressed in Roman costume. [Figure 3.3] Commissioned in 1760 and installed inside East India House's General Court Room in 1764, it was one of four statues by Peter Scheemakers that were sculpted at the same time. Clive's statue stood alongside Scheemakers's concomitantly made statues of Stringer Lawrence and George Pocock, and as a set, they declared "their many eminent and signal services to this Company".<sup>1</sup> Of these three men, Robert Clive was by far the most famous. In 1760, shortly before the Company commissioned the marble statues, Francis Hayman exhibited a painting in London's Vauxhall Gardens titled "Robert Clive receiving the Homage of the Nabob".<sup>2</sup> It shows Clive after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, magnanimously receiving Mir Jafar, the Mughal commander who became the new Nawab of Bengal. [Figure 3.1] The public exhibition of this painting enhanced Clive's fame, presenting the battle's outcome as a genteel meeting between two curious young gentlemen.

In 1765, the year after his statue in Roman costume was installed in the General Court Room, Robert Clive returned to India as the Governor of Bengal. He then went on to serve his second term as the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies. It was during this period in India that Clive accepted the diwani of Bengal on behalf of the East India Company from the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, when the Treaty of Allahabad was enforced on 16 August 1765.<sup>3</sup> The word “diwan” means “collector”, and “diwani” indicates the right to collect revenue. Through this transaction, the East India Company became the Mughal Emperor’s tax collector for all of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and Shah Alam II lost financial control of his most prosperous territories.

When Robert Clive, now Baron Clive of Plassey, returned to England in the late 1760s, he brought with him a staggering personal fortune. He wanted to materially set himself up as an English aristocrat, and to do this, he conspicuously surrounded himself with visible wealth, buying vast tracts of land in Wales, and acquiring a Palladian town house in London’s Berkeley Square. He also acquired a home in Bath and bought Walcot Hall in Shropshire. However, of all his new properties, the one that stood out as epitomising his incalculable wealth was Claremont Estate in Surrey. Clive purchased it in 1768, shortly after his final return to England, from the Duke of Newcastle’s widow. He arranged for the house and gardens to be completely rebuilt by Capability Brown, the most famous architect in Britain at that time. Claremont was one of Brown’s most famous commissions, and there was much speculation about how much cash Clive poured into the project.<sup>4</sup>

To fill his numerous residences, Clive collected Western art. Connoisseurship was a subject he knew little about, so he used money to overcome his limitations by hiring people with specialist knowledge to acquire oil paintings on his behalf.<sup>5</sup> In this way, he assembled a collection of fashionable Old Master paintings that suited his new aristocratic surroundings. He also commissioned paintings, most famously arranging for Benjamin West [Figure 4.14] to create a large canvas that aggrandised his actions for Claremont’s dining room.<sup>6</sup> Clive’s excessive spending on art was noted by Georgian society, and his decision to hire experts to make purchases on his behalf made him a source of ridicule in some circles. Horace Walpole, the eighteenth-century art historian and man of letters, wrote that Robert Clive had no understanding of art’s value.<sup>7</sup>

Clive’s fame, paired with his insatiable spending, made him a target of criticism.<sup>8</sup> Shortly after his final return from India, a famine of devastating proportions broke out in Bengal. Today, it is believed that the Bengal Famine of 1769–1770 caused the deaths of ten million people, about a third of Bengal’s population at the time. When news of this catastrophe reached Britain, the public questioned how Robert Clive’s colossal fortune was amassed. It literally looked as if he had robbed Bengal and left its people to die. Clive was certainly not the only East India Company official to have drained Bengal’s wealth, but his fame drew attention to his incalculable spending activities in Britain.

By the early 1770s, Robert Clive’s public image as a hero of empire was in tatters. In 1771, *Town and Country Magazine* published a satirical memoir that named him as “Nero Asiaticus”, who, “having fleeced the Asiatics as much as he was able”, had become “one of the richest subjects of Europe”.<sup>9</sup> The memoir, which derived the “Nero Asiaticus” alias from the statue of him in Roman costume,<sup>10</sup> [Figure 3.3] cast Clive as a mad man who ignored the ravages of the Bengal Famine from his opulent surroundings

in England. Only a decade earlier, when the East India Company commissioned the marble statue of Clive for its General Court Room, he was unquestionably celebrated as a military hero and a key proponent of Britain's imperial expansion in India. Now he was reviled, mocked, and labelled as a nabob. The Persian word "nawab", an honorific term used for high-status noblemen or governors connected with the Mughal Empire, took on a new meaning in the English language in the 1760s. It was used to describe men who, after living in South Asia, returned home with dubious fortunes and corrupt foreign ways. In the words of Margot Finn, a nabob was "consumed by his individual needs, addicted to Indian tastes, and incapable of casting off his commercial origins to acquire gentility".<sup>11</sup> Such men were blamed for India's mismanagement,<sup>12</sup> and the East India Company was cast as the cradle from which the nabobs had spawned, with Robert Clive named as the most infamous nabob of them all. In Hobson-Jobson's dictionary of colloquial Anglo-Indian English, Robert Clive is the only individual mentioned by name in the definition of the word "nabob".<sup>13</sup>

To rid its reputation of "nabobbery", the East India Company's Court of Directors commissioned a large oil painting that connected Robert Clive with an important act of philanthropy. With news of the Bengal Famine destroying both Clive's and the Company's reputation in Britain, the East India Company established "Lord Clive's Fund", which is today regarded as the first corporate pension scheme in the City of London. It was set up in April 1770, purportedly by Robert Clive, by securing the scheme's funding from the Nawab of Bengal, Najim ud-Daulah, the son and successor of Mir Jafar. According to the East India Company, after the Battle of Plassey, Mir Jafar promised to set up a fund to financially assist old and disabled East India Company soldiers in Britain, along with the widows and orphans of those who died in the Company's service.<sup>14</sup> Following his untimely death, Mir Jafar's son was instructed to honour his father's promise. A new side entrance to East India House was constructed at 4 Lime Street Square, where the new Military Fund was headquartered. This new entrance featured a large door leading into a high-ceilinged entrance hall with a domed roof.<sup>15</sup>

To decorate the Military Fund's entrance, in 1770 the Court of Directors instructed Edward Penny, the Royal Academy's first "Professor of Painting", to create a picture dramatising the moment when Robert Clive gained the Nawab's support for the pension scheme.<sup>16</sup> The painting was completed by 1772 and was exhibited that year in the Royal Academy's fourth summer exhibition, under the effusive title,

Lord Clive explaining to the Nabob [of Bengal] the situation of the invalids in India; at the same time showing him a deed whereby he relinquishes Meer Jaffier's legacy, five lacks of rupees, to the Honourable East India Company, for the support of a military fund.<sup>17</sup>

The popularity of the Royal Academy's exhibitions ensured that the painting would have been seen by thousands of people before it was relocated to the Military Fund's office on Lime Street. Edward Penny was well known for his portraits of men performing philanthropic gestures and acts of bravery. Most famously, he painted "The Death of General Wolfe", showing the moment when James Wolfe, the commander of British troops who defeated the French on Quebec's Plains of Abraham, took his last breath.



Compositionally, Penny's painting of Wolfe echoes a Pieta, casting the dying man as a martyr.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, in the painting for the Military Fund's office, Penny cast Robert Clive as a great man who cared deeply for the welfare of British men and their families. After the Royal Academy's exhibition closed on 29 May 1772, the painting was moved into the Military Fund's entrance, and in 1773 Edward Penny was paid 200 guineas, in two instalments, for his work. This money came directly out of Lord Clive's Fund, the pension scheme that the painting commemorated, and not out of the Company's cash.<sup>19</sup>



*Figure 4.1.* Robert Clive receiving from the Nawab of Bengal the grant for Lord Clive's Fund. Edward Penny, 1772. British Library, Foster 91. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



Figure 4.2. “The India Directors in the Suds”. *Town and Country Magazine* (December 1772, 705–6). Photograph by the author.

This was the first time that the Company had acquired a narrative painting commemorating a successful moment in its history. Previously, the only other painting to hang in the Company’s corridors to memorialise a historical moment was Richard Greenbury’s “Atrocities at Amboyna”, which showed the torture and murder of English men at the hands of the Dutch in the early seventeenth century. [Figure 1.2] Unlike the Amboyna painting, which controversially went missing soon after it was completed, Edward Penny’s portrait dramatised a positive, decisive moment in the Company’s history. Clive is dressed in an East India Company uniform, a red cloak and breeches, with a white shirt and stockings. He wears a red sash across his chest, and his sword’s hilt is hanging from his left hip. The document in his right hand is the warrant for Mir Jafar’s legacy, and he is looking directly at Najim-ud-daula, the new Nawab of Bengal. Clive’s left hand is gesturing towards some sick and injured men in the background who are dressed in uniforms representing different branches of the East India Company’s military service. Further back, there is a beautiful young widow with a baby on her lap, surrounded by three small children. Najim ud-daula’s reaction to these needy people is one of shock. His left hand lightly touches the warrant, indicating his full support for it. His Indian courtiers stand supportively behind him, on the painting’s left side.

When the Royal Academy’s exhibition opened in April 1772, Robert Clive’s battered public reputation was under intense scrutiny. In May of that year, while the painting was still being exhibited in the Royal Academy, a House of Commons Select



Committee of Enquiry revealed the extent of the corruption in India that Robert Clive and others had committed. Town and Country *Magazine*, the satirical publication that printed the scathing memoir of Clive as Nero Asiaticus in 1771, published a venomous cartoon, dated May 1772, based on Edward Penny's painting in the Royal Academy.<sup>20</sup> Titled "The India Directors in the Suds" ("suds" being a euphemism for excrement), it completely subverted the painting's intended message. Instead of showing Clive as an altruistic, public-minded figure, it depicts him as a coward and a criminal.<sup>21</sup> Robert Clive is shown stepping backwards in horror at a ghostly group of Indian men who walk towards him through a dream-like haze. Clive has moved so forcefully that he has knocked over a chair and dropped the warrant that was in his right hand. It lies on the ground, with the single word "APOLOGY" written upon it. Behind Clive, in place of the injured soldiers and the widow, the directors of the East India Company sit calmly and remorselessly around a table.

The compositional similarities between Edward Penny's painting and the cartoon are so clear that the anonymous cartoonist must have drawn it while standing in front of the painting in the Royal Academy. It shows Indian men on the left, European men on the right, and an identical placement of shadowing, particularly in the foreground. The cartoon figure of Clive wears the same outfit as in the painting, with a sash across his chest and a sword hanging from his left hip. The Company's directors seated behind him are posed in the same way as the group of destitute soldiers, and in the middle of the cartoon, George Colebrooke, the Company's chairman, is seated in the place where Penny placed the widow surrounded by children. The Nawab and his entourage have been replaced by "the ghosts of the Black Merchants", standing inside a cloud of mist. The sheet of paper on the ground with the word "APOLOGY" written on it imitates the warrant that Clive hands to Najim ud-Daulah in the painting. Instead of the Nawab pointing compliantly at the warrant, the ghost in the cartoon is pointing at himself, indicating who should receive the apology.

The cartoon was published alongside a descriptive text that imitated a play script, placing the scene in a "London tavern". The script begins with Sir George Colebrooke, the Chairman of the East India Company, leading a conversation with the Company's directors about how its reputation could have been saved by paying bribes to the Prime Minister, Lord North. Colebrooke advises the others to "be cautious upon so tender a point, perhaps we may be over heard: consider we are in a public tavern". Robert Clive then barges in, declaring, "I heard, gentlemen, of your meeting here". Clive is then interrupted by the "ghosts of the black merchants" who have been following him. One of the ghosts demands justice for "my property – my life – my children", and Clive responds by imploring the directors, "Gentlemen save me from the fangs of these daemons!" To this, one of the "black merchants" replies, "who can save thee from the hell of thine own conscience?" The vignette ends with Clive running off, the ghosts disappearing, and the directors left "so astonished that they cannot recover themselves to enter upon farther business".<sup>22</sup>

The cartoon brazenly refers to several scandals that the Company was embroiled in. To name just one, the "ghosts of the Black Merchants" alludes to the Bengal Famine, which was widely reported in Britain in 1772 when William Bolts, a merchant who did business with the Company, published his book, *Considerations on India Affairs*. The book exposed the "calamitous famine that had gripped Bengal",<sup>23</sup> and the East India

Company's conflicting interests as "monopolizers of all trade", and "sovereigns of Bengal".<sup>24</sup> Bolts claimed to have written his indictment of the East India Company out of a sense of duty, when he "felt the iron rod of oppression from the Company and their servants", and decided to expose to the British public "the distressing incompetence of the East India Company".<sup>25</sup> In the *Town and Country* cartoon, one of the "Black Merchants" says to Clive,

Thou universal dealer in fortunes and lives, art now come with thy hypocritic face to deceive thy masters, worm out their secrets under the mask of friendship, only to betray them – but they may take the ghost's word, who knows thee well, that thou smilest but to deceive.<sup>26</sup>

Robert Clive was the central villain of the cartoon, with the Company's directors seated complicitly behind him.

The cartoon also alludes to the financial crisis of 1772 that hit the City of London and was largely caused by the East India Company. In that year, a banking crisis that originated in London spread throughout Europe. Before 1772, London's markets were booming, and East India Company shares were regarded as safe and profitable. Overconfident investors, in their efforts to get rich quickly, borrowed money to buy shares. Markets became overvalued, and when credit was stopped to investors, the markets crashed. In a short space of time, 20 London-based banking houses vanished, and fortunes, which had only existed on paper, evaporated.<sup>27</sup> Added to this, the revenues that the Company had expected to gather after receiving the Mughal diwani were not forthcoming. Taking on the administration of the Mughal kingdom's eastern provinces was an unforeseen expense rather than a source of revenue.<sup>28</sup> Investors surged to take their money out of the East India Company, placing it in danger of collapsing. If it was bankrupted by the crisis, the Company would have brought down other businesses, so the Bank of England bailed it out with a substantial loan.

To the British public, the circumstances behind this financial crisis didn't add up. How could Robert Clive possess such a vast personal fortune, yet the East India Company required a loan from the Bank of England to prevent its collapse? The caricature of Edward Penny's painting in *Town and Country Magazine* lampooned the endemic corruption within the East India Company, but it targeted Robert Clive, the "maker and destroyer of nabobs, princes and traders", as the source of the Company's overseas crimes.<sup>29</sup> The cartoon demonstrates how aware the public was that a painting could be a propaganda tool. *Town and Country's* readership would have connected Edward Penny's painting in the Royal Academy's 1772 show with the cartoon of the East India Company "in the Suds".

On 22 November 1774, having been publicly goaded and interrogated by Parliament, Robert Clive died in his London townhouse in Berkeley Square. According to a popular biography of Clive, on the morning of his death he met with his lawyer at his home and was never seen alive again. The account tells us that

It was then near three o'clock, his valet-de-chambre was waiting to dress his master, who had retired into his water-closet with a sharp razor found afterwards laying on the ground by him... we do not presume to ascertain



whether it was a fit of insanity or through hurry and inexperience in the art of shaving himself, that he unfortunately cut the jugular vein.<sup>30</sup>

Clive's suicide was another embarrassment to the East India Company. Instead of celebrating the life and achievements of a man who was recently praised as a hero, the Company disassociated itself from Clive's memory. There is no mention of him in the minutes of the Court of Directors in the 12 months following his death.<sup>31</sup>

### Exorcising the nabobs

Robert Clive's damaged reputation and death tarnished the East India Company and affected the artworks it commissioned over the following decades. Most conspicuously, the Company didn't commission any portraits of living individuals until the 1790s, choosing instead to memorialise the dead rather than celebrate the achievements of the living. The first of these posthumous commissions was dedicated to General Stringer Lawrence, who died on 10 January 1775, seven weeks after Robert Clive's suicide. Although he was not as famous as Clive, Lawrence was recognised as the founder of the East India Company's army. He was also the most senior man to have served in the Company's military establishment in South Asia. As its first Commander-in-Chief, he laid down the foundation for its eighteenth-century conquests, and there was a statue of him by Peter Scheemakers in East India House's General Court Room. [Figure 3.5] The Court of Directors embraced the socially acceptable news that Stringer Lawrence had quietly passed away at the venerable age of 77 and used this event to deflect from Clive's controversial death.

The East India Company commemorated General Stringer Lawrence's life by erecting an enormous, sculpted stone memorial in his honour inside the main entrance of Westminster Abbey. It was commissioned in May 1775,<sup>32</sup> and installed by March 1777.<sup>33</sup> Before then, the only sculpture in Westminster Abbey that had been paid for by the Company was the considerably smaller memorial to Vice Admiral Charles Watson, which was installed in a less prominent location in 1763. [Figure 3.2] The directors agreed to pay William Tyler, the sculptor of the Lawrence memorial, "an expence not exceeding £600"<sup>34</sup> for his efforts but ended up paying him about £700.<sup>35</sup> To secure the monument's prominent location, the Company also incurred charges from the Abbey. It must have been important for Stringer Lawrence's memorial to be in a conspicuous place, and to claim the space on the left side of the Abbey's main entrance, some older monuments were removed. At that time, for a price, the Chapter of Westminster Abbey would relocate smaller memorials of lesser people to make way for larger monuments commemorating the lives of public figures.<sup>36</sup> On 4 August 1775, a warrant was made out "to pay the Dean of Westminster for the Ground and Permission to erect a Monument to the Memory of the late General Lawrence".<sup>37</sup> The Abbey charged the East India Company an additional 50 pounds to cover the cost of moving a pre-existing memorial,<sup>38</sup> so the total cost of installing the monument to Stringer Lawrence was at least £750, more than double the cost of the memorial to Charles Watson commissioned in the early 1760s.<sup>39</sup>

Stringer Lawrence's memorial is a massive composition that is best viewed as an assemblage of sculptures. At its top there is a bust of Lawrence wearing a breastplate embossed with a lion's head, a cloak draped over his left shoulder, and a suit of armour



Figure 4.3. Memorial to Stringer Lawrence in Westminster Abbey by William Tyler, 1777. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey.

over his right. Below the bust, the monument is flanked by two life-sized female figures. The one on the right, representing the East India Company, is seated on some bales of goods, and is pointing her right hand up at Lawrence's portrait bust. Under her left hand, she has the East India Company's coat of arms. The female figure on the left is an angel holding a shield inscribed with an epitaph composed by Robert Orme,<sup>40</sup> the East India Company's official historiographer. It reads, "FOR DISCIPLINE ESTABLISHED/FORTRESSES PROTECTED/SETTLEMENTS EXTENDED/FRENCH AND INDIAN ARMIES DEFEATED/AND PEACE CONCLUDED/IN THE CARNATIC". At the centre of the monument's plinth there is a relief landscape of Tiruchirappalli, showing a British encampment in the foreground, and the famous Rock Fort towering in the background. It commemorates Lawrence's victory of 1757, when he and Robert Clive repelled the French at Tiruchirappalli, securing East India Company dominance over southern India. To create this relief, the East India Company would have shown William Tyler pictures of the site, such as Francis Swain Ward's landscape of the Rock Fort [ Figure 2.1 ] and sketches by Robert Orme.<sup>41</sup>

At the base of the monument, in letters that are far larger than those on the shield bearing Lawrence's epitaph, is the following inscription. "ERECTED BY/THE EAST INDIA COMPANY/TO THE MEMORY OF/MAJOR-GENERAL STRINGER LAWRENCE/IN TESTIMONY OF THEIR GRATITUDE/FOR HIS EMINENT SERVICES/ IN THE COMMAND OF THEIR FORCES/ON THE COAST OF COROMANDEL/FROM THE YEAR MDCCXLVI TO THE YEAR MDCCLXVI".



*Figure 4.4.* Detail from Stringer Lawrence's memorial showing a landscape of the Rock Fort at Tiruchirappalli. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey.



The Company made it clear who had paid for the monument. It was erected soon after the East India Company had fallen into severe financial difficulties, only two years after Lord North's Regulating Act was passed into law, allowing Parliament to scrutinise the Company's finances.<sup>42</sup> The Company had fallen upon hard times and been exposed as immoral, so memorialising Stringer Lawrence in such a conspicuous way was a distraction from numerous scandals, such as those connected with Robert Clive, Britain's most infamous nabob.

### The return to allegory

Following Clive's death the Company stopped celebrating the military heroics of living men, explaining why the next painting to be commissioned didn't show any identifiable people. In 1777, the East India Company commissioned the Venetian artist Spiridione Roma to paint an oval ceiling painting. "The East Offering its Riches to Britannia" measures 228 cm tall by 305 cm wide and was installed into the ceiling of East India House's Revenue Committee Room in 1778.<sup>43</sup> Spiridione Roma was from Corfu, which at that time was a colony of Venice. He came to London in around 1770, and although he was a skilled artist who exhibited a couple of artworks with the Royal Academy,<sup>44</sup> he mainly earned a living restoring oil paintings.<sup>45</sup> The Company paid Roma £100 for the oval painting, which included the cost of framing and setting it into the ceiling.<sup>46</sup>

Roma's ceiling painting represents a temporary return to the themes of the Company's early-eighteenth-century commissions, before the territorial expansion of the 1750s. The symbolisms behind the painting are modelled after the sculpted chimneypiece in the Directors' Court Room which was completed in 1730 by John Michael Rysbrack. [Figure 1.11] Just like the Rysbrack sculpture, Roma's ceiling painting shows Britannia seated on a rock, surrounded by children who represent the union of the two rival East India Companies in the early eighteenth century. Both compositions show Britannia's shield and spear, and an elderly man, representing a river, reclining at her feet. They also both feature women who symbolise the places where the Company traded, and an East Indiaman ship in the background.

Aside from the obvious change in medium from sculpture to painting, there are several differences between the Rysbrack and Roma compositions. According to an article published in 1778, which explains the meaning behind the Roma painting, the elderly man who personifies the Thames in the Rysbrack chimneypiece represents the Ganges in Roma's painting.<sup>47</sup> The dockworker standing over the bale of goods in the sculpture is replaced in the painting by a figure of Mercury, the Roman god of commerce. Most significantly perhaps, Roma's painting expresses the geographical shift of the Company's trade by the 1770s. In Rysbrack's sculpted composition, the three women that Britannia receives riches from represent the Middle East, India, and Africa. Forty years later, the Roma ceiling painting shows Britannia receiving gifts from India and China, while Persia stands in the background. Roma's adjustments to the Rysbrack composition reflect geographical changes to the Company's trade.

A sketch of another proposed design for Roma's painting<sup>48</sup> shows even more deviations from the Rysbrack sculpture. In the sketch, instead of showing the personified Eastern nations as women, India, China, and Persia are shown as bearded men wearing





*Figure 4.5.* The East offering its riches to Britannia by Spiridione Roma, 1777–1778. British Library, Foster 245. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

curious hats. The sketch is crowded with additional figures including three British men. Two of them wear tricorn hats, and are shown supervising the scene before them, while the third man is seated at a barrel and reading a ledger. Indian men and women are shown labouring on the foreground's left side. An elephant, a trumpeting angel, and an extra ship also appear in the sketch, as does a troop of scantily clad dancers and musicians in the background. It is impossible to know why this design was rejected in favour of a simpler composition, but perhaps the representations of people were problematic. Having seen how viciously Edward Penny's painting was lampooned in 1772, the directors might have been wary of these contemporarily dressed men being satirised. It was safer to show female allegorical figures like those sculpted on the Rysbrack chimneypiece.

### Corruption at Madras

In 1784, seven years after the ceiling painting by Spiridione Roma was completed, and a decade after the monument to Stringer Lawrence was erected in Westminster Abbey, the Company commissioned not one but two sculptures by Thomas Banks, to commemorate another deceased East India Company military hero. Sir Eyre Coote died at



*Figure 4.6.* Preliminary drawing for a ceiling painting for East India House's Revenue Committee Room by Spiridione Roma, c.1777. British Library, WD3546. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Madras in 1783 at the age of 57, while he was serving as the Commander-in-Chief of the East India Company's armies, a role that had previously been held by both Stringer Lawrence and Robert Clive. Eyre Coote had taken part in several well recorded military campaigns in the eighteenth century. Most famously, he had worked alongside Robert Clive during the recapture of Calcutta in 1756–1757, though it is believed that the two men continually argued and were sworn enemies.<sup>49</sup> Coote also played a decisive role in the final months of the Carnatic Wars, commanding the Company's troops in 1760, at the Battle of Wandiwash, which gave the Company the upper hand against the French.<sup>50</sup> He then went on to become the head of the East India Company's Madras Army, which involved "protecting" the sovereignty of Muhammad Ali Khan, the Nawab of the Carnatic. If local rulers appeared to reject the Nawab's leadership, it was Coote's responsibility to send in the Company's armies to quell a "rebellion". This is what happened at Madurai in 1763–1764, when the East India Company sent in its armies to seize Madurai and execute its errant ruler, Yusuf Khan.

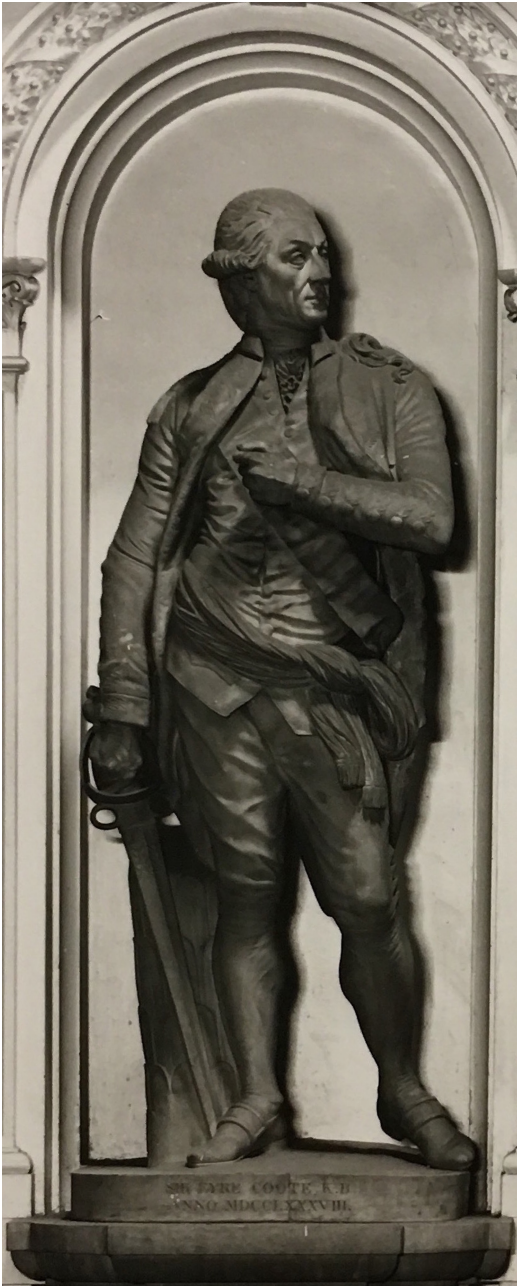
Eyre Coote returned to England in 1771 and was awarded the Order of the Bath for his successes in the Carnatic Wars. He avoided the criticisms that Robert Clive

and other high-ranking East India Company officials were subjected to at that time. In 1775, King George III promoted Coote to the rank of general, and sent him to command troops during the American Revolutionary War.<sup>51</sup> Following Britain's failure to hold America, Coote was sent back to India in 1778 as Commander-in-Chief of the East India Company's forces. He remained in the post until his unexpected death at Madras in 1783.

On 28 April 1784, the East India Company resolved to commemorate Eyre Coote's service in India with the two sculptures by Thomas Banks (1735–1805).<sup>52</sup> The decision to commission two sculptures was unique in two respects. First, it was the only time in the Company's history that an artist was simultaneously commissioned to make two different sculptures dedicated to the same person. Second, both sculptures broke from the precedent of showing Company heroes in Roman costume. In 1784, the year that Thomas Banks received the two sculpture commissions, Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger had passed the India Bill. This led to the creation of the Board of Control, a branch of the UK government that would oversee the East India Company's financial affairs.<sup>53</sup> The circumstances surrounding Coote's death show that the Company's establishment in Madras was corrupt and fraught with squabbles over money. Perhaps the disgrace of its indecorous behaviour at Madras prompted the Court of Directors to commission the two sculptures, showing Coote not as a Roman but as a modern man.

One of the sculptures was a marble statue for East India House's General Court Room. Coote's career was linked with the successes of Stringer Lawrence, Robert Clive, and George Pocock, all of whom, in Roman costume, had been on display in that room since 1764. Coote now joined them, conspicuously in contemporary dress, holding a downward-pointing sword in his right hand and an Order of the Bath medal around his neck. The other Banks sculpture dedicated to Coote was a white marble memorial for Westminster Abbey. It was placed in a narrow, awkward place in the North Transept, which can only be viewed from a distance while standing at an angle. To fit this space, Banks composed a triangular memorial that was approached from its right side.<sup>54</sup> It is close to the memorial to Charles Watson but is closer in size to Stringer Lawrence's memorial. It features an angel symbolising Victory, who is pinning a portrait medallion of Eyre Coote up high, onto a palm tree. Below the medallion, at the base of the tree, there is an Indian helmet with an anchor nose guard, and a "jubba"-style tunic. Next to these is a set of trophy weapons, some Western and some not, possibly modelled after a gentleman's private collection. The sword and quiver bear no resemblance to weapons used in India, but the shield and "chahar-kham" bow were both typical Indian weapons.<sup>55</sup> To the right of the weapons, seated upon the ground, there is a weeping Indian man with a cornucopia overflowing by his side.

The monument in Westminster Abbey ignores the hostile criticisms that had engulfed the East India Company in the 1770s and 1780s. Instead of a statue or bust of Coote, the anatomically perfect Indian man reclines at the memorial's base. He is so consumed with grief that he hasn't noticed the cornucopia, symbolising India's bounty, spilling out beside him. Another noticeable departure from the Company's previous commissions is the display of weapons and armour at the memorial's centre. By pinning a cameo portrait of Coote above the display, his military role is highlighted in a different way, alluding to his time in India during the Carnatic Wars and the Siege of Calcutta. The cornucopia is a deliberate denial of the contemporaneously reported



*Figure 4.7.* Sculpture of Eyre Coote by Thomas Banks, 1784, for the General Court Room of East India House. British Library, Foster 244. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





Figure 4.8. Memorial to Eyre Coote by Thomas Banks, 1784, in Westminster Abbey. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

news of the Bengal Famine. Coote's memorial unashamedly presents the Company as a magnanimous institution that brought prosperity and order to India.

The circumstances behind Eyre Coote's death at Madras were confusing and unsettling. He died at Fort St George on 27 April 1783, three days after he had arrived by ship from Calcutta. During the journey, his ship was reportedly chased down the coast, along the Madras Roads, for 48 hours by an enemy French fleet. Concerned about being captured, Coote allegedly stood on the ship's deck for the entire journey. Before landing at Madras, he was "struck with a paralytic stroke" which he never recovered from.<sup>56</sup> Amongst his belongings that were unloaded from the ship at Madras, there was a chest of gold valued at "five Lacs of Rupees".<sup>57</sup> The ownership of the gold, and any orders regarding what to do with it, had evidently been entrusted to Coote, who had lost the ability to speak. A dispute arose over what to do with it. Was it part of Eyre Coote's personal fortune? Did it belong to the East India Company? Was its intended recipient in Madras? The Company's Madras Council requisitioned it, and had it minted into pagodas.<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately for Eyre Coote's widow, Lady Suzannah Coote, the intended recipient of the gold was Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, who had loaned money to Coote, and was expecting to be repaid at Madras. Because the Madras Council had claimed the chest of gold, Lady Coote was rendered incapable of paying off her husband's debt. Admiral Hughes was not one to let personal tragedy stand in the way of his business dealings and "actually made a demand upon Lady Coote for the repayment of the loan of a lakh of pagodas early on the morning after the General's death", threatening to sue Coote's estate if the payment wasn't received.<sup>59</sup> Suzannah Coote was forced to ask the East India Company for help. A squabble ensued, and the Company unhelpfully cast the blame for Lady Coote's predicament on Eyre Coote's attendants because they failed to interrogate a dying man about a chest of gold.<sup>60</sup> This predicament continued for two weeks, then on 10 May 1783, four more chests of gold, all addressed to Eyre Coote, arrived at Madras. Once again, the Company's Madras Council took possession of it. Admiral Hughes was repaid out of this second shipment, probably because he could cut off loans to the Company and its employees if his repayment was denied. Initially, the Madras Council offered to pay him with "bills on Bengal for the amount of his debt", but so severe was Admiral Hughes's distrust of the Company's finances that he demanded payment in hard currency.<sup>61</sup>

Admiral Sir Edward Hughes was not a well-liked man in the early 1780s. He was in charge of the Royal Navy's operations in the East Indies, the same post that George Pocock and Charles Watson held before him. Unlike his heroic predecessors, Hughes was fiercely criticised for neglecting his military duties in favour of profiteering. The *Bengal Gazette*, a weekly newspaper printed in Calcutta, wrote in 1781 that "the [King's] Fleet has nay fired a single Shot but in SALUTES since Sir Edward left Portsmouth"<sup>62</sup>. Another notice in the *Gazette* flamboyantly described Admiral Hughes as follows.

[O]ne Edward Durbar supposed to be Commander of a British Squadron in these parts, sent out for the protection of the Trade – has lately disappeared... [and] a reward of Eight Finnams, and five dudies will be given to any one who will produce the Body, dead or alive, of the aforesaid Edward Durbar.

The *Gazette* described him as “a short thick set, fat Man, his skin sits remarkably light about him, has very rosy Gills, and drivels a little at the mouth, from the constant use of the QUIDS”.<sup>63</sup> Admiral Hughes’s nickname, “Edward Durbar”, was earned through his private business dealings in India as a moneylender, which kept him so busy that he ignored his official duties.

Lady Coote’s predicament, to repay her deceased husband’s debt to Admiral Hughes, was resolved in May 1783, but the sting of her mistreatment remained. In a letter to Warren Hastings dated 18 June of that year, she wrote about “the embarrassment occasion’d by Sir Eyre Coote’s Publick Debt to the Admiral”.

The extraordinary, and harsh manner, in which both that Gentleman and the Select Committee continued to urge a point, which their own unaccommodating disposition had put it out of my power to settle as speedily as I wished, proved no small aggravation of Distresses, already but too severe ... I wish my painful recollections could stop even here! But circumstances too strangely convince me, that had any proper effort been made, to spare us the Chace we were abandoned to, I might still have been happy, and the publick had yet reaped the benefit of Sir Eyre’s Services!

Lamenting her deceased husband’s tarnished reputation, Lady Suzannah Coote demanded that the Company organise her return to England.<sup>64</sup> In February 1784, Eyre Coote’s body was disinterred from Saint Mary’s Churchyard in Fort St George and placed in a lead coffin. Lady Coote, along with her husband’s remains, landed at Portsmouth on 2 September 1784. The coffin was conveyed to the family’s estate at Rockbourne for internment,<sup>65</sup> and along the way, crowds gathered by the roadside to pay their respects.<sup>66</sup>

News of Eyre Coote’s demise, and the dramatic circumstances at Madras that overshadowed his death, would have taken several months to reach London. The first detailed report of these events probably came from Arthur Owen, the manservant who attended Coote’s bedside at Madras before he died. Owen championed Lady Coote’s cause before the Madras Council and described his relationship with her husband in a letter to the Company’s directors in London as follows.

Highly honored in being a constant attendant on the revered General, from the time he landed in India, to the Day when he finished on Earth his career of Glory: I feel a certain consequence, in having been particularly noticed by such an exalted Character.... It will ever be my study to prove myself deserving of his commendation and of the countenance of support of the Honorable East India Company.

Owen concluded his letter by saying, “I embark for Europe next October [1783]. On my arrival in England I shall wish for an opportunity of testifying to your Honble & much respected Court, the sense I entertain of being employed on such important services”.<sup>67</sup> When he reached London, Arthur Owen must have given the directors his account of the events surrounding Coote’s death. A secret letter from

Bengal, dated 20 October 1783, was read to the Court of Directors in London on 28 April 1784, which prompted the decision to commission both the monument to General Eyre Coote in Westminster Abbey and the statue for the General Court Room.<sup>68</sup> Lady Coote's appeal to Warren Hastings, who was then serving as the Company's first Governor General at Fort William, along with Owen's testimony, ensured that the Court of Directors in London were aware of the Madras Council's behaviour.

The fight at Madras over the gold's ownership highlights the Madras Council's reputation for malevolent behaviour in the early 1780s. The Company's representatives in India often supplemented their incomes through dubious business dealings that conflicted with the Company's interests. In 1777 the Madras Council's rapaciousness had already been exposed by the unexpected death of Lord George Pigot, who was appointed Governor of Madras by the East India Company's directors on 9 February 1775,<sup>69</sup> to assist with "the ticklish situation of the Carnatic".<sup>70</sup> Company employees had become creditors to Muhammad Ali Khan, the Nawab of the Carnatic, and taken control of the Madras establishment. Having already served as Governor of Madras from 1755 to 1763, Pigot was regarded as having the necessary experience and connections to sort out these corrupt officials. He arrived at Madras in 1776, but soon after implementing changes, on 24 August 1776, he was kidnapped and imprisoned without charge. He died under house arrest on 11 May 1777, and the news of his suspected lynching was discussed in Parliament by January 1778.<sup>71</sup> The scandal surrounding his death contributed to the British government's decision to create the India Act of 1784.

Reports of Eyre Coote's death reached London in 1784, immediately before William Pitt the Younger's ministry was about to pass the India Bill into law. The Company tried and failed to argue against the passing of the bill, and, in that same year, commissioned the two sculptures of Eyre Coote.<sup>72</sup> The Court of Directors announced this decision in April 1784, and less than a year later, on 25 January 1785, the Company advanced £250 to Thomas Banks to begin the monument in Westminster Abbey.<sup>73</sup> It wasn't until 1793, more than eight years later, and six years after both sculptures had been completed, that the Company paid the remainder of what it owed to Banks. It is difficult to say how much was paid in total for the work, but the completion of both sculptures certainly cost more than a thousand pounds.<sup>74</sup>

In 1778 Lord Pigot's position didn't protect him from the machinations of money lenders at Madras, and likewise, in 1783, Lady Suzannah Coote, the widow of the Company's Commander-in-Chief, could not escape Admiral Hughes's cruelty. Their predicaments give perspective to how badly British moneylenders in Madras and Bengal treated their victims. The Nawab of the Carnatic, Muhammad Ali Khan, was another victim of British usury, whose debts were so great that they were reported in London. His wealth was drained by Company employees at Madras who lent him money at extortionate interest rates.<sup>75</sup> In his attempts to be accepted by the East India Company he became an object of mockery who was described as "suspicious, vain and ambitious; and not being of a resolute or active mind".<sup>76</sup> A poignant token of Muhammad Ali Khan's struggle for acceptance is his portrait by George Willison, which he sent to East India House in 1775.<sup>77</sup> The portrait was placed in the Committee



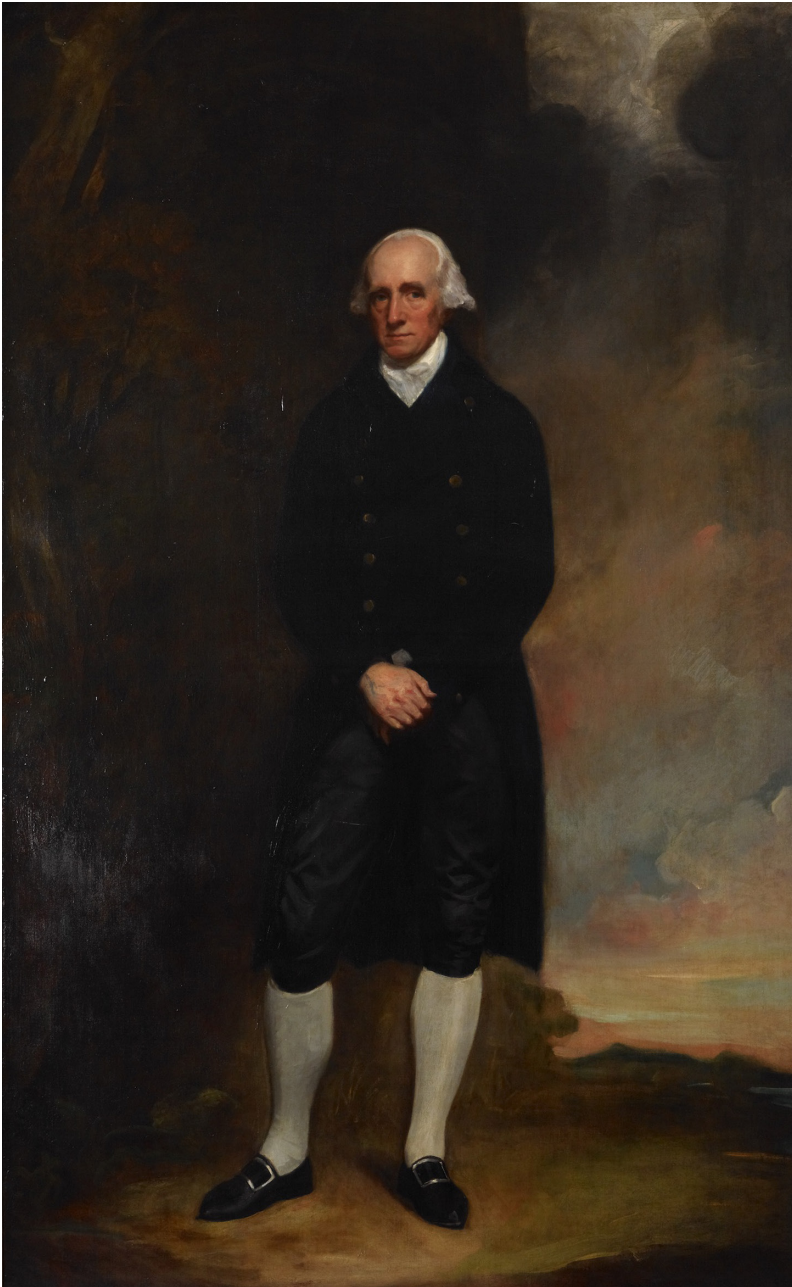
of Correspondence Room, alongside the ten landscapes by Francis Swain Ward. This placement is significant because nine of the Ward paintings were of sites in the Carnatic where Muhammad Ali Khan's armies would have accompanied the East India Company's troops to defeat the French in the 1750s. Muhammad Ali Khan commissioned several full-length portraits of himself, all of which show him in the same pose and style of dress, by the artists Tilly Kettle and George Willison. He distributed these portraits as gifts to literally show his presence inside the courts of influential political allies, including the court of King George III.<sup>78</sup>

All the portraits that the East India Company commissioned in the two decades after Robert Clive's death were of deceased men such as Stringer Lawrence and Eyre Coote. Even the figures in Spiridione Roma's ceiling painting were allegorical. This aversion to celebrating the achievements of living individuals in the 1770s and 1780s partially explains why certain eighteenth-century figures were omitted from the East India Company's commissioned portraiture. For example, although Warren Hastings was the subject of numerous portraits during his lifetime,<sup>79</sup> it was unthinkable for the Company to celebrate his achievements until after his death. To commission a portrait of Hastings during his lifetime would have exposed the Company to the ridicule of men like Edmund Burke, the main prosecutor at Warren Hastings's lengthy impeachment trial, which ran from 1788 to 1795. Burke made headlines during the trial by connecting Hastings's actions with the wrongdoings of Robert Clive. James Gilray, the famous Georgian cartoonist, published several political cartoons that pointedly cast Hastings as a nabob, showing him dressed in a turban and robes while performing overtly corrupt actions.<sup>80</sup>

In July 1800, the Court of Directors accepted, as part of a bequest, a full-length portrait of Warren Hastings by George Romney, along with a painting of Charles Cornwallis by Arthur William Devis. William Larkins, the man who bequeathed the paintings to the Company, was a close friend and admirer of Warren Hastings who lived in India from 1772 to 1793, serving as the Company's Accountant-General while Hastings and Cornwallis were in the post of Governor General at Fort William. When Hastings departed for England in 1785, he entrusted Larkins with his money matters at Calcutta.<sup>81</sup> On accepting the portraits of Hastings and Cornwallis from the Larkins bequest, the Court of Directors installed them inside the Committee of Correspondence Room, on either side of the fireplace on the room's west wall.<sup>82</sup> The other two portraits in that room were of Muhammad Ali Khan by George Willison and the 1626 portrait of the disaster-bound Persian envoy, Naqd Ali Beg. [Figure 1.3] To make space for the portraits, some of the landscapes by Francis Swain Ward were removed. The Committee of Correspondence Room was an extremely private area of East India House, comparable to the Directors' Court Room. Unlike Edward Penny's painting of Robert Clive, which was paid for out of a pension fund and exhibited at the Royal Academy before being placed in a public area of East India House in the 1770s, the portrait of Warren Hastings was moved from Larkins's home to a private, inner area of East India House. This discreet transaction meant that the Company evaded public criticism over having a portrait of Warren Hastings.



*Figure 4.9.* Portrait of Muhammad Ali Khan by George Willison, c.1775. British Library, Foster 12. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 4.10.* Portrait of Warren Hastings by George Romney, 1795. British Library, Foster 1.  
Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 4.11.* Portrait of Charles Cornwallis by Arthur William Devis, 1792–3. British Library, Foster 6. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



### Duelling statues: Warren Hastings and Charles Grant

It wasn't until 1820, two years after his death, that the East India Company commissioned a portrait of Warren Hastings. The motion to make the statue and display it in the General Courtroom was first put forward by the directors on 22 September 1818, immediately after Hastings's death in August of that year, but it was voted down. In the General Court's minutes, it was written that the proprietors "cannot agree with the recommendation of the Court of Directors to place the Statue of the late Right Honble Warren Hastings among those Statesmen and Heroes, whose Figures adorn their Court". The proposal was regarded as "highly impolitic ... [because Hastings] ... involved the Company in unnecessary, bloody and expensive wars, and was guilty of oppression and wrong towards the Native Princes".<sup>83</sup> These were all charges waged against Hastings during his seven-year impeachment trial.

The rejection of the sculpture commission in 1818 was instigated by Charles Grant, the East India Company's Chairman, who declared that the Company was "utterly unable" to go along with the proposed commission, making him "obliged expressly to declare [his] dissent".<sup>84</sup> Charles Grant and Warren Hastings had a long history of disagreement that started in Calcutta in the 1770s. When Hastings served as the East India Company's first Governor General from 1773 to 1785, he introduced Orientalism as "the official policy and the unofficial mood of the fledgling British government in Bengal".<sup>85</sup> Along with the scholars he patronised, such as Charles Wilkins and William Jones, Hastings was interested in South Asian languages and literature. The discoveries of the Orientalists, which led to the formation of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, related to the cultivation of broader policies into British rule; Hastings saw the study of India's languages and literature, and their application into Company policy, as a positive means towards Indianising its work in South Asia. Charles Grant opposed Hastings's Orientalist position, believing that the Company should reject the indigenous systems gleaned by the Orientalists, and, instead, implement an organised, hard-working administration that advocated British moral principles. Britain's government echoed Grant's attitudes, and most likely influenced his placement as the East India Company's chairman in 1805, 1809, and 1815.

In the late eighteenth century, Charles Grant worked at Calcutta as an administrator while Warren Hastings was serving as Governor General.<sup>86</sup> Following the death of two of Grant's children in 1776, he underwent a religious conversion that turned him into a stalwart opponent of Orientalism. He believed that "the British had become 'passive spectators' of the 'unnatural wickedness' practiced by their Indian subjects".<sup>87</sup> When he returned to London in 1790, his evangelical Christian beliefs prompted him to author a tract titled "Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect to Morals".<sup>88</sup> Twenty years later, Grant's tract was published and presented before Parliament by the Anglicists, a group of evangelical Christians, Utilitarians, and Free Traders who opposed Orientalist policies in the Company's South Asian affairs. Grant's "Observations" prompted the establishment of missionary activity in India, the founding of the Diocese of Calcutta, and the creation of the first Bishopric in South Asia.

The Court of Proprietors' rejection of the Hastings statue proposal in 1818, led by Charles Grant, merely delayed the commission. On 12 January 1820, the directors



*Figure 4.12.* Sculpture of Warren Hastings for East India House's General Court Room by John Flaxman, 1823. British Library, Foster 525. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



Figure 4.13. Memorial to Charles Grant in St George's Church Bloomsbury by John Bacon the Younger, 1825. Photograph by the author.



once again put the resolution before the General Court for a Hastings statue. By that time, Grant was serving his final three months as chairman, which diminished his powers. The 1820 vote approved the commission, and the Court of Proprietors ruled, in a complete reversal of its 1818 ruling,

[t]hat as a last testimony of approbation of the long, zealous, and successful services of the late Right Honourable Warren Hastings, ... a statue of that distinguished servant of the East India Company be placed among the Statesmen and Heroes who have contributed in their several stations to the recovery, preservation, and security of the British power and authority in India.<sup>89</sup>

In April 1823, the sculpture of Warren Hastings by John Flaxman was completed at a cost of 1,000 pounds, and soon afterwards, it was installed in the General Court Room.

Charles Grant died in October 1823, immediately after the Hastings sculpture's installation. The Company's directors put forward a motion to memorialise him as well, and the resulting sculpture, a large memorial by John Bacon the Younger, was installed in Charles Grant's parish church, St George's Bloomsbury, in 1825. William Fullarton Elphinstone, one of the directors at the time of Grant's death, opposed the commission. His key objection was that Charles Grant was not in the same league as the other men the Company had previously memorialised through sculpture. Elphinstone opined that, if the directors had proposed to place the memorial not in a church, but "in that Court [of Proprietors Room]; suppose the marble figures could imbibe the spirit of life, how could Charles Grant look Warren Hastings in the face"? He also saw the commissioning of a memorial dedicated to an East India Company Chairman as a dangerous precedent, saying that

[i]f their predecessors, who appeared to be wiser in this respect than those who were favourable to the motion, had acted upon the principle now contended for, they should, at the present day, have every church within twenty miles of London filled with mural monuments, erected to the memory of deceased Directors.<sup>90</sup>

William Fullarton Elphinstone was a trader who supported the Company's original mercantile foundation. Charles Grant's quest to implement a government in Asia according to British principles was corroding the business values that Elphinstone stood for. In the end, Elphinstone's objections were overturned, and John Bacon the Younger was commissioned to sculpt Grant's memorial in January 1825.<sup>91</sup> In April of that year Elphinstone resigned from the Court of Directors.

The commissioning of the Warren Hastings and Charles Grant sculptures reveals the debates that raged between the Orientalists and Anglicists within East India House in the early nineteenth century. Never had the directors' recommendations for art commissions been so openly politicised. In the eighteenth century, it was unthinkable that an evangelical Christian administrator, regardless of his rank within the Leadenhall Street establishment, could influence such a vote, let alone become the subject of an East India Company sculpture commission. However, the policy changes that occurred



within the Company during the early nineteenth century paved the way for Charles Grant to be memorialised. Elphinstone's objections to Grant's memorial, and Grant's objections to Warren Hastings's statue, have one rhetorical similarity; both claimed that the proposed statues were of men who didn't merit comparison with the men whose statues were already in the General Court Room.

### Edward Clive's gift

In 1821, amid the Anglicists' rise to acceptance, the East India Company accepted a massive oil painting as a gift from Robert Clive's son, Edward Clive (1754–1839). The painting, by Benjamin West (1738–1820), is most likely a copy of an earlier painting, also by West, that Robert Clive commissioned in the late 1760s. It dramatised the moment in August 1765 when the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, signed the Treaty of Allahabad. Titled "Lord Clive receiving from the Mogul the Grant of the Duanney", the painting theatrically portrays Shah Alam handing financial control of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa to the East India Company. The painting, Edward Clive's gift to the Company, measures 290 cm tall by 400 cm across. It was placed inside East India House's Committee of Correspondence Room, where it took up an entire wall.<sup>92</sup>

The painting's size reflected the importance of this moment. At its centre, Robert Clive (1725–1774) is shown standing to the right of Shah Alam (1728–1806), who is



*Figure 4.14.* Robert Clive receiving the Mughal diwani from Shah Alam by Benjamin West, c.1795. British Library, Foster 29. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

seated upon a raised, canopied throne. Behind Clive there is a crowd of British dignitaries with the East India Company's colours displayed behind them. On the other side stands Shah Alam's exotically dressed retinue, wearing jewels and turbans, with two men in the background seated on elephants. The architecture in the distance is distinctly European, with the large domed building behind them looking remarkably like St Paul's Cathedral.<sup>93</sup> The West painting, accepted by the Company in 1821, commemorated an event that occurred more than half a century earlier, providing a revisionist account of a meeting held under far humbler circumstances. The actual event, described by the Mughal historian Ghulam Hussain Khan, was conducted inside a tent, and was "done and finished in less time than would usually have been taken up for the sale of a jack-ass or a beast of burden".<sup>94</sup> The transaction between the two men, finalised on the evening of 16 August 1765,<sup>95</sup> involved the payment of Rs 2.6 million from the Company to Shah Alam in exchange for financial control over the Mughal Empire's provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It was a small sum to hand over in exchange for financial control of such vast territories. The East India Company could now tax people, exploit resources, and directly profit from industries in these regions.

Two moments in Robert Clive's career – the Battle of Plassey and the founding of the East India Company's pension fund – had been celebrated during Clive's lifetime through art works that were exhibited in public places such as the Vauxhall Gardens and the Royal Academy. [Figure 3.1 and 4.1] By contrast, West's original painting of Clive obtaining the diwani for the Company was privately commissioned and intended for private display inside Claremont, the estate Clive purchased in 1768. When he died in 1773, the painting was incomplete. It wasn't until 1795 that West finished it for display in the Royal Academy's annual exhibition.<sup>96</sup> Although Robert Clive's memory was maligned throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries, his acquisition of the Mughal diwani in 1765 was regarded as a decisive moment in the Company's history. Even Edmund Burke (1729–1797), one of Robert Clive's strongest detractors, regarded this moment as "the great Act of the constitutional Entrance of the Company into the Body Politick of India".<sup>97</sup>

By giving the West painting to the East India Company, Edward Clive augmented his family's reputation before the Court of Directors. In the Court Minutes it was recorded that it "represents one of the most important events in the administration of his [Edward Clive's] distinguished ancestor, and in the history of the East India Company".<sup>98</sup> Gifting the West painting to the Company helped Edward Clive reposition his family's legacy by showing his father in the act of handing fiscal power from the Mughal Empire to the East India Company. Such an important moment appealed to the Anglicist faction within the East India Company, who opposed the Orientalist approach to conducting affairs in India. Those who privileged the English language and British culture over the languages and cultures of India would have seen the painting's topic as aligning with the Company's principles in 1820, casting Robert Clive as a proto-utilitarian.

Edward Clive had a difficult relationship with the East India Company. While serving as Governor of Madras from 1798 until 1803, the Court of Directors unceremoniously ended his term, recalling him to London for insubordination. He was in the south of India during the Fourth Mysore War, when Tipu Sultan's court was dismantled and looted. Edward and his wife Henrietta indirectly took part in this looting,

accepting as gifts precious objects from the Mysore court. These objects joined the already impressive collections he inherited from his father, which were acquired from the north and east of India in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1809, Edward Clive opened his family's collections to the public by creating a museum inside his home at Powys Castle in Wales. Made up of over 700 objects that were gathered by Robert Clive and Edward Clive, it is still considered one of the most important collections of South Asian art and artefacts in Europe. The opening of the museum at Powys Castle in 1809 was a way of promoting the Clive family's importance. In that same year, East India House's Oriental Repository opened its first room for the display of Indian decorative objects. Opening the museum at Powys at the same time was unlikely to be a coincidence. A decade later, giving Benjamin West's large painting to the Company was most likely another attempt by Edward Clive to augment his family's reputation. It was a reminder to the Company's directors of how rich and important his family was, with the Clive Museum's collections outrivalling those in East India House's Oriental Repository.

### Conclusion

Today, the causes of the rise, fall, and resurrection of Robert Clive's career have become an important narrative for post-colonial historians. To chart these changes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one doesn't need to look any farther than the East India Company's art collections. Its three portraits of Robert Clive – one a sculpture and the other two oil paintings – highlight the scandals and image changes that occurred during his lifetime, and in the half-century after his death. The three Clive portraits are valuable primary sources for understanding Clive's and the Company's oscillating self-image.

There are many other East India Company artworks that are best understood by looking at the scandals the Company sought to mitigate. The enormous memorial to Stringer Lawrence in Westminster Abbey was a distraction from Clive's suicide, while the commissioning of the two Eyre Coote sculptures diverted attention from the usurious shenanigans of the Madras Council, and the parliamentary developments in London that altered the Company's operations. As for Warren Hastings, his lengthy impeachment trial made it impossible for the Company to commission a portrait of him until after his death, by which time, his legacy was still maligned by Anglicists like Charles Grant. Research on these artworks reveals a spectrum of tensions that afflicted the Company's reputation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

### Notes

- 1 General Court, 24 September 1760. BL, IOR/B/76, 176–177.
- 2 David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 191–3.
- 3 The Treaty of Allahabad, BL, Mss Eur G49.
- 4 Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown* (London: Country Life, 1950), 139.
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## INDIAN SCULPTURE

An examination of the East India Company's art collections wouldn't be complete without considering the Indian sculptures that were sent to East India House, mainly in the nineteenth century. The earliest displays of Indian sculpture inside East India House related to the founding of the Oriental Repository. The development of these collections as part of the India Museum, founded in 1836, happened alongside major shifts in the Company's public role. This chapter looks at how the different sculpture collections that were sent from India to London's East India House related to the Company's changing operations in the nineteenth century. By the time East India House was emptied of its contents in 1861, Indian sculptures outnumbered the Company's Western sculpture collections.

The Oriental Repository, the Company's combined library and museum, opened in the first decade of the nineteenth century, following the renovations to East India House in the 1790s. Before then, the artworks displayed inside the Company's headquarters in London were exclusively by Western artists. The absence of Asian decorative objects inside East India House was most likely connected with prejudices amongst Britain's ruling classes, who believed that British standards could be undermined by foreign ways. In 1773, Edmund Burke, the same man who spearheaded the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, said before Parliament, "if the wealth of India was transferred to government control, its corrupting influence would overwhelm the remnants of English civil liberties". Likewise, in 1770 William Pitt the Elder said before the House of Lords that "The riches of Asia have been poured in upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but Asiatic principles of government".<sup>1</sup> Displaying objects from India within a place of business in the City of London was a sign of weakness that aligned the Company with the corrupt actions of "nabobs", those "quintessentially possessive" individuals who were "addicted to Indian tastes".<sup>2</sup> When non-Western art objects eventually went on display inside East India House, they were not displayed inside its rooms of business.

This chapter begins by identifying the areas of East India House where Indian sculptures were displayed. The first of these "articles of curiosity", taken from the Company's warehouses,<sup>3</sup> were placed in the second-floor gallery room used by the Oriental Repository. After 1836, when the Oriental Repository was formally divided into the India Museum and the Oriental Library, some adjacent rooms on the second floor were converted into museum galleries. This division heralded further expansion, with the museum spreading into some of East India House's ground floor rooms.

By the time East India House was vacated, the India Museum covered approximately 8700 square feet of the building. The museum's collections then led an itinerant existence until the late 1870s, when they were divided between the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A).

After identifying the rooms where the Indian sculptures were displayed, the circumstances behind their removal from India and arrival at East India House will be examined. Some of the individuals responsible for bringing the sculptures to London are named, and the reasons for the selection of those sculptures are discussed. By looking chronologically at the trafficking of these objects, one can trace several changes and adjustments to the Company's operations. The earliest sculptures to be sent to London were single donations from men who wanted to advance their careers by impressing the Company's London establishment, while the later ones, sent in larger shipments, were from men who oversaw archaeological excavations.

The chapter concludes by looking at the museum's growth alongside some major changes to the East India Company in the early nineteenth century. In 1813 and 1833, the Company lost its trade monopolies in Asia. When its mercantile operations collapsed, most of the Company's labouring workforce was made redundant. Thousands of men who had anchored the paternal reputation of "John Company" inside its warehouses and on London's East India Docks lost their seemingly secure jobs.<sup>4</sup> The implosion of the Company's mercantile operations meant that the functions of several large, ground floor rooms inside East India House became obsolete. After the India Museum was formally created in 1836, these rooms were converted into galleries. Through the museum's expansion, the Company replaced its previous role as "John Company", the paternal employer of London's labouring classes, with another form of public benevolence.

### The building

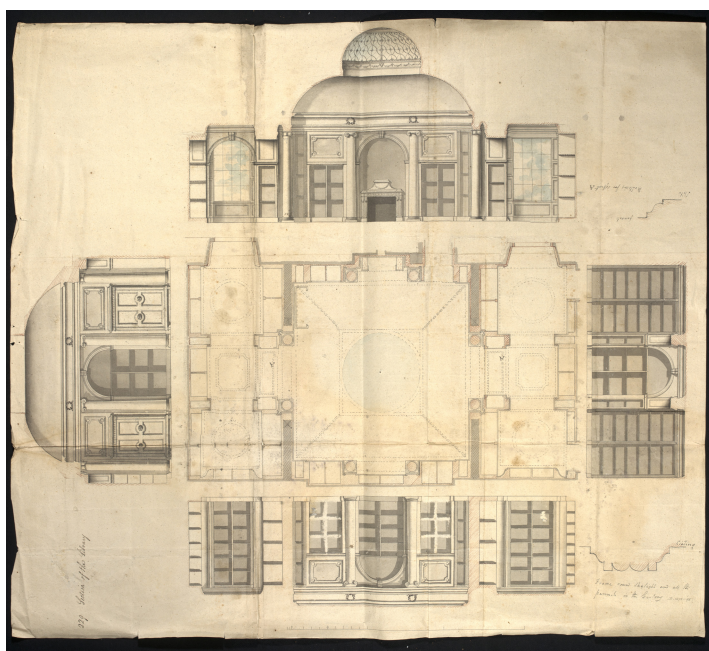
The museum and library inside East India House began as connected institutions known as the Oriental Repository, where books and manuscripts existed alongside objects representing the fields of geology, zoology, botany, and industry, as well as the people, religions, and cultures of Asia. Examples of the marketable, manufactured "stuff of science" were collected right from the inception of the Oriental Repository to justify imperialism and promote the Company's view that its workings improved people's lives in both Britain and India.<sup>5</sup> Charles Wilkins wrote about this in 1799, as part of his proposal to the Court of Directors, where he outlined the Oriental Repository's mandate. This remained the main directive of both the museum and the library while it was inside East India House.<sup>6</sup> Over the following decades, galleries for the display of objects would expand throughout the building, showing how important the museum was to the Company's public image.

The first room to be used for the display of Indian sculptures was a large gallery space topped with a glass lantern dome on the building's second floor, directly above the Seaman's Pay Office, at the corner of Lime Street and Leadenhall Street. Next to this room was the Librarian's office, and on the other side of the office, directly above the building's Leadenhall Street entrance, was the Oriental Repository's reading



room. These three rooms, which looked out over Leadenhall Street, were where the Company's books and manuscripts, "together with any articles of curiosity that can be collected tither at the house or Warehouses", were moved to in the early nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The Oriental Repository's rooms were constructed in the late 1790s<sup>8</sup> as part of East India House's extension along Leadenhall Street.<sup>9</sup> The reading room opened just after December 1801<sup>10</sup> and the adjoining gallery room, with its display of objects, opened in 1809. To access the Oriental Repository's reading room, one had to walk through the gallery room where the Indian sculptures were displayed. Before 1817, members of the public were permitted to visit the gallery room, but to enter the reading room required the librarian's approval. Charles Wilkins, the Oriental Repository's librarian, occupied the office through which one had to pass to enter the reading room. The names of all readers were recorded in the library's "Day Book", along with lists of the items they consulted.<sup>11</sup> Some prospective readers were denied access to the reading room, or were even banned, such as Peter Gordon, who infamously responded to his expulsion by publishing a pamphlet that critiqued the East India Company.<sup>12</sup>

In August 1837, immediately after the India Museum's formal creation, a new gallery was added on the building's second floor for the display of natural history specimens, known as the "Bird Room". This was followed two years later by the conversion of other second-floor rooms into museum spaces.<sup>13</sup> These new rooms



*Figure 5.1.* Plan of the Oriental Repository's original gallery room on the second floor of East India House. V&A, D.1672, 1898. © Victoria and Albert Museum London.

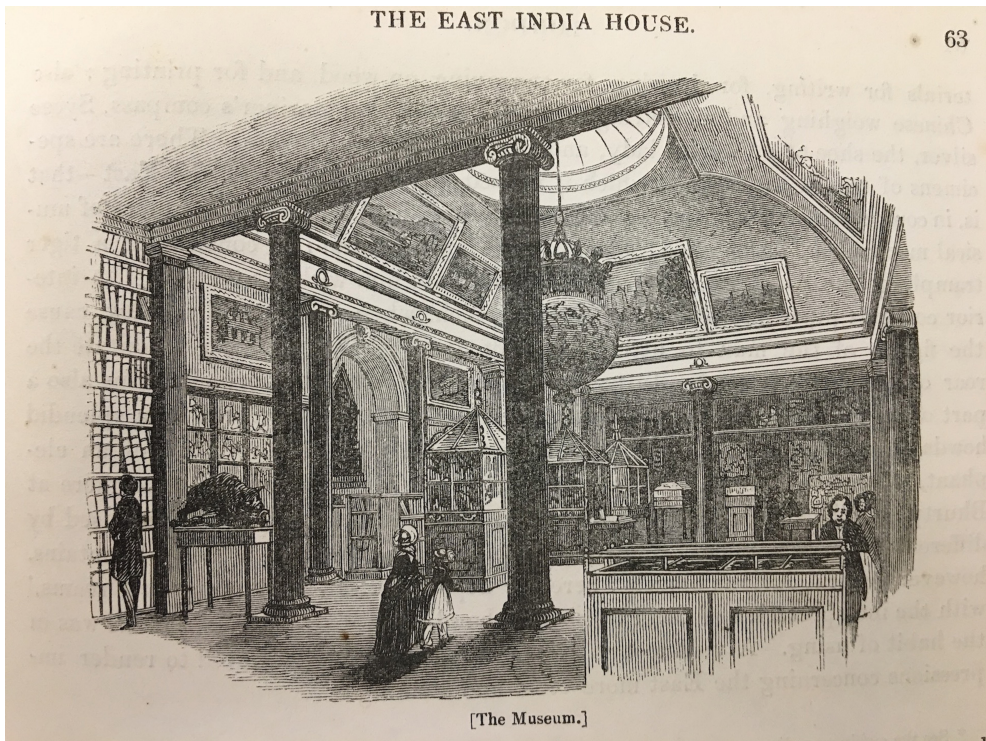


Figure 5.2. Interior of the Oriental Repository's original gallery room on the second floor of East India House. J.C. Platt, "The East India House", 63. Photograph by the author.

were all accessed by a corridor that ran parallel to Lime Street and were reached by the staircase leading to the Oriental Repository's original gallery room.<sup>14</sup> The largest room added in the late 1830s was the "Bird Room", which was built inside an open courtyard, directly above the Company's Old Bullion Office. Measuring approximately 40 feet square, it accommodated the museum's taxidermy birds, which were acquired under the curatorship of Thomas Horsfield (1773–1859), the American-born medical doctor and natural historian who became the first head of the India Museum. Horsfield specialised in the wildlife of Southeast Asia and had worked as an assistant to Charles Wilkins since 1819. His role was initially to catalogue natural history specimens, many of which he had personally donated to the Oriental Repository.<sup>15</sup> He was placed in charge of the museum in 1836, and in the same year, Horace Hayman Wilson, the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford, was appointed to take charge of the library.

The division of the museum from the library happened three years after the East India Company lost its remaining trade monopoly with China. With its commercial operations switched off, the Company became an administrative, tax-collecting

## INDIAN SCULPTURE



Figure 5.3. Detail of East India House's second floor, showing (A) gallery room (B) librarian's office (C) reading room (D) additional museum rooms (E) Bird Room. Based on British Library, IOR/H/763A, 107.

entity, and many of East India House's large, ground floor rooms lost their functions. One of these rooms, the Seaman's Pay Office, was at the front of the building, between the main Leadenhall Street entrance and the corner of Lime Street. The Company no longer employed a vast payroll of merchant seamen to transport goods across oceans, so in 1845 this large hall was absorbed into the museum.<sup>16</sup> Another large room on the ground floor that was handed over to the museum was the New Sale Room, where the goods the Company used to import into London had been sold by auction since 1799. The Seaman's Pay Office and the New Sale Room were both built in the late 1790s as part of Richard Jupp's renovations to East India House. By the late 1850s, the original Oriental Repository rooms on the second floor were dwarfed by the museum's new ground floor galleries.<sup>17</sup> The Seaman's Pay Office, the New Sales Room, and the Chairman's House had all become part of the museum,<sup>18</sup> with the architect Matthew Digby Wyatt transforming the New Sales Room into a dedicated sculpture gallery.<sup>19</sup> By 1860, when the India Museum's contents were packed up for removal from East India House, it occupied at least eight rooms, and took up about 8700 square feet of space, making it over six times larger than the original gallery room that opened in 1809.<sup>20</sup>





Figure 5.4. The India Museum's Sculpture Gallery, designed by Matthew Digby Wyatt inside the New Sale Room of East India House. *London Illustrated News*, 6 March 1858, 229–230. Photograph by the author.

### The collections

As early as the seventeenth century, objects of curiosity were shown to important visitors in the Company's headquarters, but these were mainly natural history specimens. The earliest known account of these items is dated 1669, when the Company was based at Craven House. In a book describing his travels, the Grand Duke of Tuscany described seeing "curious things both animal and vegetable" such as specimens of birds, trees, and "a fish, equal in size to a sea-calf, without scales, but covered with a rough and uneven skin, and having a long and deformed head, with a horrid looking mouth, in which are two rows of teeth".<sup>21</sup> Another seventeenth-century account, authored by Robert Boyle, tells how, while visiting "the East India House", he was permitted to plunge his hand into "a parcel of between 100 and 150" uncut diamonds.<sup>22</sup> It was not until the early nineteenth century that artworks from South Asia were publicly exhibited inside a dedicated area of East India House.

The first known display of non-Western decorative objects in East India House predated the opening of the Oriental Repository's second-floor gallery by five years. Elfi Bey, an envoy of the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, came to London in December



1803 and Charles Wilkins gave him a tour of the new library, showing him an illustrated Bhagavata Purana that “appeared to most rivet his attention”.<sup>23</sup> Elfi Bey was also shown the mechanical organ known as “Tipoo’s Tiger” in the Committee of Correspondence Room on East India House’s ground floor. When played, this famous wooden semi-automaton organ simulates the movement and sounds of a European being attacked by a tiger.<sup>24</sup> It arrived in London by ship in August 1800,<sup>25</sup> and was the first large object to be recorded on display in the Oriental Repository’s gallery room on 29 July 1808.<sup>26</sup> It was one of the most famous objects inside East India House, and eager public visitors would notoriously turn its crank to set it into operation, screaming and groaning in imitation of a dying man. The gallery room’s proximity to the Oriental Repository’s reading room meant that “the nerves of the readers taken unawares” were perpetually tested by its operation, until eventually it was “deprived ... of his handle, and ... some of his internal organs”.<sup>27</sup>

In June 1809, the Oriental Repository’s gallery room opened with a selection of sculptures from Bihar, Karnataka, and Sri Lanka alongside the Tipu’s Tiger music box.<sup>28</sup> A year later, two of Francis Swain Ward’s ten landscape paintings were moved in.<sup>29</sup> These were the views of the Rock Fort at Trichinopoly [Figure 2.1] and the rock formation at Viralimalai. [Figure 2.4] Both are sites connected with the Carnatic Wars that had no relationship with any of the objects in the room. Together, the paintings and sculptures conveyed a mash-up of what the Indian subcontinent was like to a London audience. The landscape paintings, which only three decades earlier proclaimed the East India Company’s conquests over the French, now represented, as described by Romita Ray, “the heterogeneous spaces of empire” that had become important to British identity.<sup>30</sup> Removed from the political context that guided their acquisition in 1773, the two stray Ward landscapes in the Oriental Repository were now a way for Britons to visualise, in the broadest sense possible, the vastness of empire.

The Oriental Repository functioned as both a museum and a library, with numerous connections between the material on paper that was consulted in the reading room and the objects in the gallery spaces. The natural history collections, composed of both taxidermy specimens and natural history drawings, are perhaps the most obvious example of three-dimensional objects connecting with items on paper.<sup>31</sup> Many of the Indian sculptures were also accompanied by illustrated reports and albums of watercolours that recorded the broader findings of the sites they were taken from. Drawings, maps, manuscripts, publications, and (by the mid-1850s) photographs were often assembled by the same people who oversaw the removal of the sculptures and their transport to London.<sup>32</sup>

One of the first sculptures to be displayed in the Oriental Repository’s original gallery was given to the Company by Samuel Davis, a reader whose name frequently appeared in the Oriental Repository’s early Day Books. His use of the reading room shows that he knew Charles Wilkins before he donated the stone sculpture of Surya in his possession to the Oriental Repository in 1809.<sup>33</sup> Davis most likely acquired the sculpture while he was stationed in Bengal’s Bhagalpur District between 1784 and 1793, and he most likely shipped it to London when he left India in 1806. By 1810, a year after donating the statue, Davis had been voted onto the Company’s Court of Directors, where he served two four-year terms before his death in 1819. The Surya sculpture was exhibited inside an arched niche on the south wall of the Oriental Repository’s gallery room.



*Figure 5.5.* Sculpture of Surya from Bihar. Given to the East India Company by Samuel Davis in June 1809. V&A 929(IS). Photograph by the author.

Another sculpture that reached the Oriental Repository soon after it opened was a seated Tirthankara from Western India. John Ambrose Johnson of the Bombay Engineers shipped it to London after serving the East India Company on the Mysore Survey. According to his letters and sketchbook, in around 1801–1802 he was based in and around Hallihal, a village in Karnataka, which is close to several Jain holy sites.<sup>34</sup> Unlike Colin Mackenzie, who headed up the Mysore Survey and employed a team of pandits as interpreters and information gatherers, Johnson probably didn't have employees who could identify the sectarian origins of this sculpture. He mistook it for a Buddha and brought it to London while he was on furlough in 1808. His colleague Edward Moor, who had returned to England in 1805, wrote about the statue in his book, *The Hindu Pantheon*.<sup>35</sup> Moor and Johnson most likely met in Western India, where Moor had served in the Bombay Army for over 22 years.<sup>36</sup> Moor gave the sculpture to the Oriental Repository on Johnson's behalf in around 1809, after making a drawing of it, and publishing it in his book, where it was identified as a Buddha.<sup>37</sup>

Near to where the Davis Surya was displayed, there was a black basalt Jain statue of Parsvanath from Karnataka. It was sent to London by Colin Mackenzie while he oversaw the Mysore Survey.<sup>38</sup> In a letter to Charles Wilkins dated 25 October 1808, Mackenzie wrote that the sculpture was an offering to the Company's "Honourable Court of Directors" and pointed out to Wilkins that there was a Sanskrit inscription on its base. Mackenzie most likely chose to send this sculpture to East India House because he was familiar with Charles Wilkins's scholarship on Sanskrit inscriptions and hoped the inscribed base would capture his attention. Mackenzie also sent Wilkins a drawing of the inscription along with a translation of it that he commissioned from "an old Jain Poorohit" at Garsoppa, the site where the sculpture was taken.<sup>39</sup> When he sent the sculpture to East India House, Mackenzie had already been living in India for two decades and was struggling to have his research on South Asian history and culture financially supported by the East India Company's London establishment. His decision to send it to England, and to make sure that Charles Wilkins was aware of the inscription on its base, suggests it was a ploy by Mackenzie to have his work recognised in London.

A decade later, Mackenzie sent four sculptures from Amaravati to East India House. From 1816 to 1817, a team of draughtsmen worked under his instruction, documenting the remains of the stupa at this important Buddhist site. He arranged for seven sculptures to be shipped to Calcutta.<sup>40</sup> Another four were sent onward to Wilkins in London in 1819.<sup>41</sup> One was a tall, rectangular slab inscribed with 20 neat lines of Brahmi script.<sup>42</sup> Because this long Sanskrit inscription is the slab's sole decoration, it was catalogued as a document rather than an artefact. When the Oriental Repository was divided into a separate museum and library in 1836, it was moved into the library's stores rather than the museum.<sup>43</sup> The other three sculptures that Mackenzie sent to London were rectangular slabs carved with pictures of stupas, one of which has a line of Brahmi text along its top.<sup>44</sup> There are drawings of both inscribed slabs in the album from the site's excavation.<sup>45</sup> The other two Amaravati sculptures Mackenzie sent to London are not inscribed, but they are carved with pictures of stupas, providing important documentation about the form of the Buddhist monument they came from.<sup>46</sup> Of the five stone sculptures Mackenzie sent to London's East India House in 1808 and 1819 (one from Garsoppa, four from Amaravati) three were most likely selected because they were inscribed, making them potentially more interesting to Charles Wilkins.

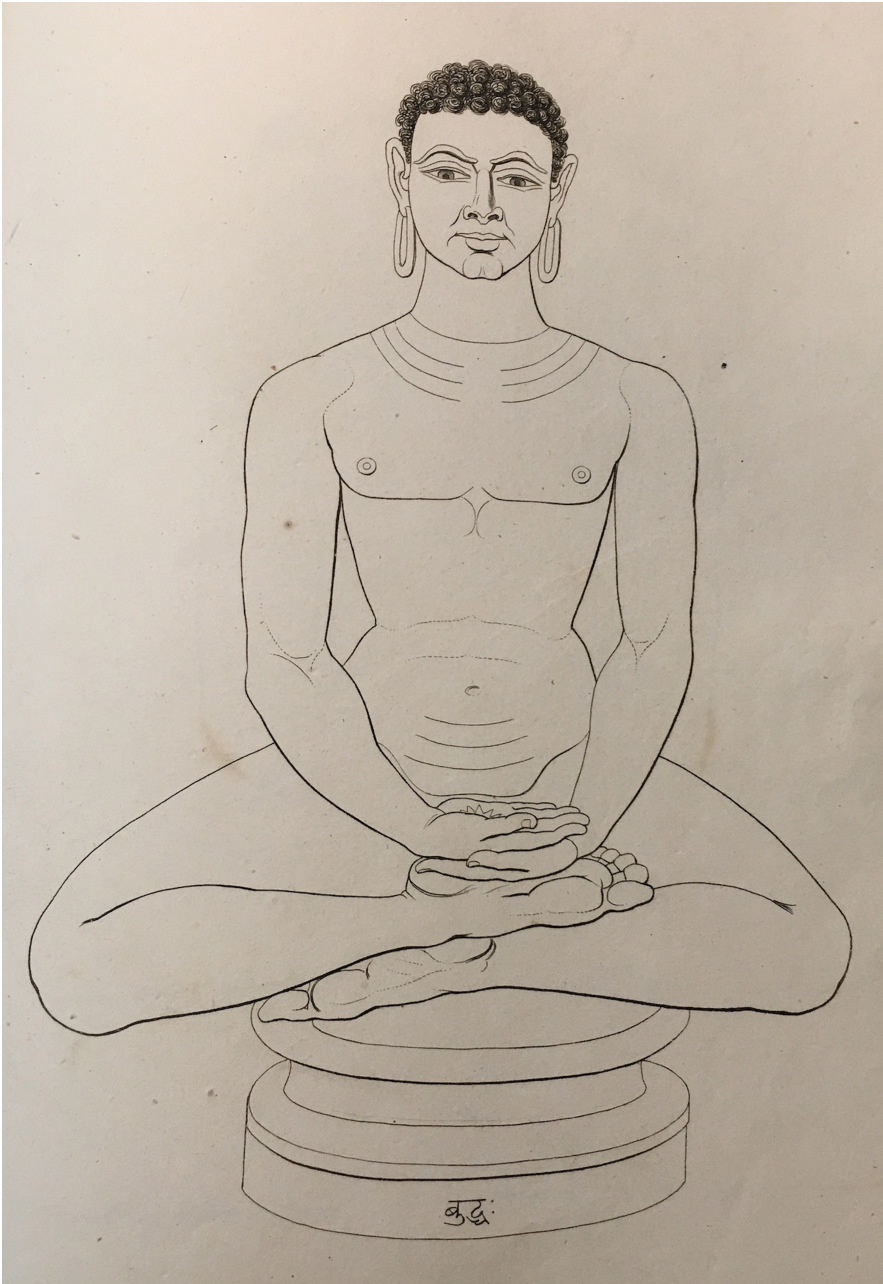


Figure 5.6. Tirthankara from Karnataka presented to the East India Company by Edward Moor on behalf of John Ambrose Johnson. Edward Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon*, picture 68. Photograph by the author.





*Figure 5.7.* Statue of Parsvanath from Garsoppa, Karnataka. Sent to East India House by Colin Mackenzie, 1808. V&A, 931(IS).



*Figure 5.8.* Sculpted slab with inscription from Amaravati. Sent by Colin Mackenzie to East India House in 1819. British Museum, 1880,0709.79. Photograph by the author.



The earliest sculptures to be presented to East India House, from individuals like John Ambrose Johnson and Samuel Davis, were most likely offered to increase their visibility before the Company's Court of Directors. Johnson and Davis would have collected these sculptures in India because it was a fashionable pastime for British gentlemen to acquire antiquities. East India Company employees had been collecting Indian statuary and bringing it back to Britain since the seventeenth century. The earliest known example of this kind of private collecting is a black basalt statue of Vishnu that was removed from Sagar Island near Bombay by Sir William Hedges. The statue, known today as the Hedges Vishnu, was presented to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in 1686, and is still there today.<sup>47</sup>

Unlike Johnson and Davis, Colin Mackenzie sent sculptures to East India House to attract financial support for his research in India. The sculptures he sent to London were part of a vast documentation project that he had begun two decades earlier. The standing Parsvanath related to Mackenzie's investigations into the Jain religion,<sup>48</sup> and the sculptures from Amaravati, which were initially mistaken for Jain artefacts, were compared to the white marble sculptures of Western antiquity.<sup>49</sup> Mackenzie was passionate about his investigations on ancient monuments, and in a memorandum authored by him in 1808, he wrote about how his research would "throw considerable light upon the ancient history of the country & its civil & religious institutions".<sup>50</sup> In 1801, the Court of Directors had cut Mackenzie's pay and allowances. He protested these cutbacks and sought to vindicate his research efforts by sending information to London, in the vain hope of inspiring the Company's directors to recognise the value of his work.<sup>51</sup> Besides the stone sculptures, he sent at least eight small bronze statues to East India House,<sup>52</sup> possibly in imitation of Charles Wilkins, who had donated his private collection of zinc figurines from Benares to the Oriental Repository.<sup>53</sup> The eight bronzes and five stone sculptures that Mackenzie sent to East India House made him the most significant donor of such objects to the Oriental Repository in its short existence.

Following the Oriental Repository's division into a museum and library in 1836, two large shipments of Indian stone sculpture were received at East India House. The first of these were sculptures from Sarnath, Kurkihar, and Jaunpur that were removed by Markham Kittoe in the late 1840s.<sup>54</sup> The second set, which came to be known as the "Elliot Marbles", were Amaravati sculptures that were sent to London from the Madras Government Museum in 1859.<sup>55</sup> These two large shipments of sculpture, both from Buddhist sites, were linked with the Court of Directors' decision to record information about monuments in India. This interest in Buddhism and archaeology connects with the career of William Henry Sykes, one of the India Museum's greatest advocates. Sykes served in the Bombay Army from 1804 to 1833, then in 1840, soon after his return to Britain, he became a director of the East India Company, serving throughout the 1840s and 1850s. He was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society and published a lengthy article in their journal titled "Notes on the Religious, Moral, and Political State of India before the Mahomedan Invasion ...".<sup>56</sup> The purpose of his article was to show, through Chinese pilgrims' accounts, "the genius of ancient Buddhism, and the possible cause of its fall in India". In Sykes's opinion, Buddhism was the dominant religion of the subcontinent during a classical age which "disappeared from India, leaving, however, indestructible vestiges of its former glory".<sup>57</sup>

It is no coincidence that during the 1840s and 1850s, many of these Buddhist “vestiges of ... glory” were sent to London’s India Museum. In December 1844 the East India Company offered funding for the collection of Buddhist imagery when it resolved to “subscribe the sum of one hundred guineas (£105) in aid of the funds of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland”.<sup>58</sup> Sykes was serving on the Court of Directors at that time and the funding was used to conserve the Buddhist cave murals at Ajanta. Robert Gill painted copies of them in the 1840s and early 1850s and sent them to the India Museum in London.<sup>59</sup>

In 1847, when Sykes was again serving as a director, Markham Kittoe was appointed as the East India Company’s first Archaeological Enquirer to the North-Western Provinces.<sup>60</sup> This appointment, which paid “a salary of Rs 250 a month”,<sup>61</sup> facilitated the sending of Buddhist sculptures to Calcutta and London. Kittoe oversaw excavations at Sarnath, Kurkihar, and Jaunpur which led to huge amounts of sculpture being relocated to museums. In one four-day period in March 1848, he reportedly “collected ten cart-loads of idols, all Buddhist”, which it appears were sent to the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in December 1848.<sup>62</sup> At least 15 of the sculptures Kittoe removed from Sarnath, Kurkihar, and Jaunpur were then sent on to the India Museum in London.<sup>63</sup> Seven of these were sketched before removal from the site.<sup>64</sup> Some were statues, such as two Buddhas from Sarnath,<sup>65</sup> which were displayed inside Digby Wyatt’s sculpture gallery in 1858, as shown on the left side of the picture published in the *London Illustrated News*. [Figure 5.4] The other sculptures were architectural fragments from Buddhist temples or stupas.<sup>66</sup>

In 1859, an even larger consignment of Indian sculptures was sent from the Madras Government Museum to East India House. In total, 116 sculpted stones from Amaravati were shipped to the India Museum. The first known proposal to send them to London was authored in 1854, by Walter Elliot, the man who excavated Amaravati in the 1840s and then sent hundreds of its sculptures to the Madras Government Museum.<sup>67</sup> Elliot and Sykes discussed the idea of sending a selection of the sculptures to London, with Sykes writing that they “would be considered worthy of presentation [to the East India Company], both on account of their intrinsic merit as works of art and of their interest as monuments of the Buddhist Sect”. Sykes advised Elliot to await instructions from London for the transfer of sculptures from the Madras Government Museum to the India Museum.<sup>68</sup> This plan was supported by Edward Balfour, the Madras Government Museum’s director, who wrote in a letter to Fort St George that

these marbles are well worth transmission to England, and though I have all my life been strongly opposed to the views of those who would remove from ancient buildings all about them that is beautiful in art, as these marbles have already been removed from their original site ... they may be made more use of in England than here.<sup>69</sup>

Most of the sculptures Elliot removed from Amaravati remained in the Madras Government Museum. In 1854, a draughtsman named Murugesan Mudaliar took drawings of 79 of the sculptures from the Elliot consignment which were presented to the Court of Directors in London. All 79 of them were selected for the India Museum and were sent to London in 1859–1860.<sup>70</sup> An additional 37 Amaravati sculptures,





*Figure 5.9.* Standing Buddha and seated Buddha from Sarnath. Sent to East India House by Markham Kittoe, late 1840s. British Museum, 1880.6 a–b and 1880.7. Photograph by the author.

which came from a different source, were sent to London at the same time. These additions had been in the coastal town of Machilipatnam since 1818, where the town’s District Collector, Francis Robertson, used them as building materials for a market-place monument. Known as Robertson’s Mound, this curious colonial monument was dismantled in the 1830s, and 37 of the sculptures that were used in its construction were sent to Madras in 1855. From there, they were selected for transmission to London. Of the 116 Amaravati sculptures destined for the India Museum, almost a third of them were from the Machilipatnam group, while the other two thirds, removed from Amaravati by Walter Elliot, were the sculptures in Murugesan Mudaliar’s drawings.<sup>71</sup>

Despite their two different provenances, all 116 of the sculptures were designated as the “Elliot Marbles”. Naming them after Walter Elliot was a deliberate way to compare them with the British Museum’s Elgin Marbles,<sup>72</sup> which were named after the



*Figure 5.10.* Sculpture fragment from Amaravati. Sent from the Madras Government Museum to East India House in 1859–1860. This one was part of Robertson’s Mound. British Museum, 1880,0709.51. Photograph by the author.

man who removed them from Athens, Thomas Bruce, the Earl of Elgin. In a letter to Edward Balfour dated January 4, 1856, William Taylor suggested that, in imitation of the naming of the Elgin Marbles, the Amaravati sculptures should be “appropriately designated the Elliot Marbles”, and be exhibited in “a room, or place by themselves, where the archaeologist may look at them undegraded by present associations” comparable to the gallery in the British Museum, where since 1817, the Elgin Marbles (today known as the Parthenon Marbles) had been on public display. Taylor believed that by displaying the Amaravati sculptures in a similar fashion to the Parthenon Marbles, they “would by common consent be deemed the most remarkable objects” in the India Museum.<sup>73</sup> This comparison shows how much the India Museum’s identity relied on its association with the British Museum’s collections of Western antiquities, with Sykes believing that the India Museum’s Buddhist sculptures were proof of a cognate classical tradition in South Asia.

When the 116 Amaravati sculptures reached London in April 1860,<sup>74</sup> the India Museum was in crisis. Less than two years beforehand, on 2 August 1858, Parliament passed a bill to take over India’s administration from the East India Company. The process of liquidating the Company’s assets had begun, and the land where East India House stood was to be sold off. In 1860, the India Museum’s collections, along with the Company’s library, were moved out of East India House in preparation for its demolition. Matthew Digby Wyatt’s sculpture gallery was soon reduced to rubble, and the 116 “Elliot Marbles” from Amaravati were sent, along with the rest of the Museum’s contents, to Fife House in Whitehall. From there, they were moved into the newly constructed India Office building, designed by Digby Wyatt and George Gilbert Scott, in the late 1860s. The non-Western sculptures in the India Museum were eventually divided between London’s British Museum and the South Kensington Museum in 1879.

During the half-century when Indian sculpture was received for display inside East India House, the nature and quantity of these consignments changed significantly. The earliest sculptures were donations from individuals who had privately collected them in India, usually during a period of service on the subcontinent with the Company. Colin Mackenzie, the first donor to give multiple sculptures to East India House, sent five large stone objects and a set of bronzes to London at his own expense. Two decades later, Markham Kittoe sent at least 15 stone sculptures to the India Museum, but this time they were shipped at the Company’s expense. A decade later, Walter Elliot was credited with sending 116 sculptures to East India House through the aegis of William Henry Sykes, who, by 1856, was the East India Company’s chairman.

The increasing sizes of these sculpture shipments coincide with changes within the East India Company’s establishment in the nineteenth century. Before the museum’s expansion, when the East India Company was still conducting trade in Asia, Colin Mackenzie hoped that the sculptures he sent to the Oriental Repository would draw attention to his research. Markham Kittoe worked under different circumstances, having been employed by the East India Company in an archaeological capacity. His role, created in 1844, signalled the Company’s growth into a bureaucracy that, amongst its many strands, oversaw and documented archaeology projects in India.<sup>75</sup> Walter Elliot also benefited from the Company’s sponsorship, as well as the private support of William Henry Sykes, the high-ranking individual within the Court of Directors who saw the Amaravati sculptures as an opportunity to increase the India Museum’s profile.



Comparisons between the sculpture traditions of Western antiquity and ancient India placed the India Museum on a similar footing with the British Museum.

### **The museum's public importance**

When the first Indian sculptures were exhibited in the Oriental Repository's gallery room in 1809, public access to the collections was not officially circumscribed. An account dated 1810 explains that entry into East India House was achieved by paying a bribe, described as a "douceur", to the staff.<sup>76</sup> Beyond this brief account, it is unclear how the public gained admission to the Oriental Repository until 1817. In that year, with the gallery becoming increasingly popular, Charles Wilkins struggled with its large number of visitors. He wrote that "the immense crowds of persons of all classes, who by various means obtain leave to visit the Library and Museum every day in the week except Sunday" had become too difficult for him to manage. To deal with these numbers, the Company's library committee resolved to limit public access to Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 10am to 3pm, and that a ticket signed by the director was required to avoid "that accumulation of persons at the door" that might otherwise happen.<sup>77</sup>

The India Museum's creation in 1836, and its subsequent expansion into other rooms of East India House, occurred while massive adjustments were happening to the Company's operations. In 1813 the Company lost control of its trade monopoly in India, with independent companies, known as trading houses, now being permitted to conduct business in South Asia. In 1833 the Company's remaining trade monopoly in East Asia was removed, and with its trading element eliminated, its warehouses, where imports were stored before being sold, were no longer required.<sup>78</sup> The land that the warehouses stood on was auctioned off, and the money raised was used to pay off debts. The Company continued to exist, providing an infrastructure that was useful for the British trading houses that now operated out of South Asia, but its original purpose as a trading company was now overtaken by an administrative role. The Company had overseen a massive commercial operation in the eighteenth century, but by the late 1830s, it turned a profit for its shareholders through business contracts and the taxation of approximately 500,000 square miles of territory under its control.<sup>79</sup>

The extinguishing of the Company's commercial operations led to thousands of East India Company workers, mostly labourers employed in London's warehouses and docklands, losing their jobs. These men handled the goods that came by ship to London, moving them in the docklands and the warehouses. Before the loss of its trade monopolies, the Company had a strong reputation as a benevolent employer. East India Company employees had job security and were eligible for benefits such as sick pay and pensions, making labouring jobs with "John Company" extremely desirable in the early nineteenth century. It has been estimated that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Company employed more than 3,000 labourers in its warehouses alone, making it the largest employer of civilian labour in London.<sup>80</sup> Between 1823 and 1835, following the extinguishment of its trade monopoly with China in 1833, the Company shed most of this labouring work force.<sup>81</sup>

In the mid- to late 1830s, when the Oriental Repository split into a separate museum and library, East India House was under considerable pressure to increase the new



India Museum's public opening hours.<sup>82</sup> One campaigner, Joseph Hume, demanded that it should emulate the British Museum's admissions policy, allowing entry to the public without possession of tickets on two days per week. The Company's response was to allow public admission to the museum on Saturdays from 11 am to 3 pm, as of 1 June 1838.<sup>83</sup> The number of visitors to East India House increased. In 1833 the Oriental Repository had an estimated 4,000 visitors, and by 1845, the annual admission figure to the India Museum was 20,000 people.<sup>84</sup>

It was in the best interest of the East India Company's directors and senior officials to project an image of paternal benevolence to the public. The thousands of labourers they had employed before 1833 were often described as "servants" and "children", probably to counteract public criticisms of the Company's actions in Asia.<sup>85</sup> After shedding this extensive labour force, East India House couldn't afford to be viewed as an introspective club house for its shareholders. By expanding the museum, the Company protected its reputation by giving East India House a new, outward-facing function.<sup>86</sup> It substituted one source of benevolence, that of the paternal employer, with being the philanthropic founder of a museum. This benevolent reputation was expressed by the building itself, through the facade on Leadenhall Street that was completed in January 1798,<sup>87</sup> showing Britannia and King George III at its centre, alongside symbols of the Company's wealth, maritime ambition, and Western values. [Figure 3.9] John Bacon's facade may well have inspired the design of the tympanum above the British Museum's main entrance by Richard Westmacott, which was completed in 1851 to reflect the spirit of the objects housed inside.

The museum's expansion and the addition of more Indian sculptures to the Company's collections led to the New Sale Room's conversion into a sculpture gallery in the 1850s. The India Museum was competitively linked with other museums,<sup>88</sup> particularly the British Museum, where the public came to see classical European antiquities. Displays of Buddhist sculpture were important to the India Museum because they were regarded as vestiges of a comparable classical civilisation in India. Under Lieutenant Colonel William Henry Sykes (1790–1872), the collecting of Buddhist sculptures reached its apotheosis when the 116 Amaravati sculptures, known then as the Elliot Marbles, were sent to East India House. Sykes also facilitated the copying of the Buddhist cave murals at Ajanta into portable paintings, and the shipment of Buddhist sculptures from Sarnath, Kurkihar, and Jaunpur by Markham Kittoe. The Indian sculpture collections in the India Museum were one way that the East India Company validated its importance in the nineteenth century.

In 1860, the India Museum's collections were removed from East India House, and by 1862 the titanic building that had housed its collections was demolished.<sup>89</sup> The Company's bureaucratic functions were absorbed into the British state, and a new building to accommodate the newly created India Office was constructed on King Charles Street in Whitehall between 1861 and 1867. In 1879 the India Museum's sculptures were divided between the South Kensington Museum and the British Museum. Those that were regarded as medieval went to South Kensington, while the Buddhist objects that had been analogised with classical Western sculpture went to the British Museum. In 1909 a proposal was put forward, supported by the notoriously imperialist George Nathaniel Curzon,<sup>90</sup> for the collections to be reunited inside a new, dedicated India Museum on London's south bank, to be designed by Robert Fellowes

Chisholm. However, the exorbitant cost of the proposed building ensured that the idea was short-lived.<sup>91</sup>

### Conclusion

Indian sculptures were introduced inside of East India House in the final six decades of its existence and were first displayed inside a single room that was about 1,300 square feet in size. By the late 1850s, the India Museum had expanded into approximately 8,700 square feet of East India House.<sup>92</sup> During its main years of expansion the museum acquired Buddhist sculpture, which was increasingly viewed as the physical manifestation of a classical civilisation in India. The importance of these sculptures was exerted by comparing them with the classical Western collections of the British Museum. In 1851, the East India Company compared itself to the British Museum, declaring that

one might have expected a more magnificent Collection than here meets the eye, ... but in reality when we reflect on the comparatively short time which has been devoted to its [the India Museum's] formation, the wonder is that the assemblage here presented is actually so extensive.<sup>93</sup>

One of the most obvious but least explored reasons for the India Museum's expansion is the side effects of the Charter Act of 1833, which terminated the Company's trade monopoly with China. Large areas inside of East India House, constructed to serve functions tied with the Company's mercantile functions, were no longer needed. The creation of the India Museum happened immediately after the demise of the East India Company's trade monopolies. It expanded into several large, disused rooms of East India House at a time when the Company's reputation as a benevolent employer in London had collapsed. One type of benevolence was replaced with another, and a new public role emerged inside East India House, devoted to the museum's role in educating the British about its overseas empire. In a description of the museum dated 1851, its continued expansion throughout East India House was regarded as a priority.

The public, we repeat, are very much indebted to the Honourable East India Company for having submitted such treasures to their inspection; and we trust that, as the collection increases, means will be found for lodging it in more appropriate apartments so that its undoubted merits and attractions, may be more duly appreciated.<sup>94</sup>

The museum had become a self-perpetuating institution that could endlessly expand into East India House's disused corridors. It was a crutch that the Company manipulated to assert its usefulness to Britain's public.

### Notes

- 1 James H. Bunn, "The Aesthetics of British Mercantilism". *New Literary History*, 11, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 316–317, notes 25, 27.

- 2 Margot Finn, "Swallowfield Park, Berkshire" in *The East India Company at Home*, ed. Kate Smith and Margot Finn (London: UCL Press, 2018), 228.
- 3 Oriental Repository Day Book, 2 December 1801. BL, Mss Eur F303, front of vol. 35.
- 4 Margaret Makepeace, *The East India Company's London Workers* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).
- 5 Jessica Ratcliff, "The East India Company, the Company's Museum, and the Political Economy of Natural History in the Early Nineteenth Century", *Isis* 107, no. 3 (2016), 497.
- 6 Charles Wilkins, "Sketch of a Plan for an Oriental Museum", 2 January 1799. In Ray Desmond, *The India Museum: 1801–1879* (London: HMSO, 1982), 8–10.
- 7 Oriental Repository Day Book. BL, Mss Eur F303/35, front of volume.
- 8 College at Fort William, supply of materials for the Oriental Repository. BL, IOR/H/489, 37.
- 9 William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London: John Lane, 1924), 138–139.
- 10 Oriental Repository Day Book. BL, Mss Eur 303/35, front of volume.
- 11 Oriental Repository Day Books. BL, Mss Eur F303.
- 12 Peter Gordon, *The Oriental Repository at the India House* (London: 1835); Desmond, *The India Museum*, 28–31.
- 13 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 35–36.
- 14 Plan of East India House's 2nd Floor. BL, IOR/H763A, 107. The "Bird Room" is marked as area 722.
- 15 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 32; Letter from Wilkins to the Library Committee, 6 October 1819. BL, IOR/E/1/140, 1718.
- 16 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 39.
- 17 Plans of East India House dated 1861. BL, IOR/H/763A, 103–107. Facsimiles published in George Birdwood, *Relics of the Honourable East India Company* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1909), proceeding 39–40.
- 18 These are the names assigned to the 3 rooms in 1805. BL, IOR/H763A, 14. In the V&A there are architectural drawings c.1798 of the Seaman's Pay Office (D.1691–1898) and the New Sale Room (D.1702–1898).
- 19 *London Illustrated News*, 6 March 1858, 229–230.
- 20 When it closed in 1860, the museum had three galleries on the ground floor, one on the first floor and six on the second floor. BL, IOR/H/763A; Birdwood, *Relics*, plates after 40.
- 21 Lorenzo Magalotti, *Travels of Cosmo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, through England* (London: J Mawman, 1821), 326.
- 22 Robert Boyle, *Experimenta and Observationes Physicae Wherein Are Briefly Treated of Several Subjects Relating to Natural Philosophy in an Experimental Way* (UK: John Taylor, 1691), 33.
- 23 *The Times*, London, Friday 9 December 1803. Fleming's Bhagavata Purana is now in the British Library. BL, Add.Or.1031-1038.
- 24 V&A, 2545(IS).
- 25 Susan Stronge, *Tipu's Tigers* (London: V&A Publishing, 2009), 64–68.
- 26 BL, Mss Eur F303/1, 149, 65v.
- 27 *Athenaeum*, 5 June 1869, 766.
- 28 Oriental Repository Day Book, 24 and 29 June 1809. BL, Mss Eur F303/1, 74, 150.
- 29 The landscapes of Trichonopoly Fort (Foster 24) and Viralmalai (Foster 10) were transferred to the gallery on 15 January 1810. BL, Mss Eur F303/1, 80.
- 30 Romita Ray, *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 15.
- 31 Mildred Archer, *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: HMSO, 1962).
- 32 For example, see the Mackenzie Amaravati Album, BL WD1061; the Kittoe Albums, BL WD2876-2879; the Murugesan Mudaliar drawings, WD2242-2283. All contain drawings of sculptures that were sent to the India Museum.
- 33 Day Book entries for 24 June 1809. BL, Mss Eur F303/1, ff. 74 and 150.

- 34 John Ambrose Johnson's letters, Wellington Archive, Southampton University. 1/118, folder 2; BL, WD1055, 32.
- 35 Edward Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon* (London: 1810).
- 36 Letter from Moor to Court of Directors, 3 September 1806. BL, IOR/D/162, 132.
- 37 Moor, *Hindu Pantheon*, 248 and plate 68. It is now in the British Museum's collections. BM, 1880.1551.
- 38 Jennifer Howes, *Illustrating India: The Early Colonial Investigations of Colin Mackenzie* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 71–74.
- 39 Letter from Mackenzie to Wilkins, 25 October 1808. BL, Mss Eur Mack Gen 18A, 277.
- 40 BL, WD1061, 87.
- 41 Fergusson Volume 1, p.a2. The four Amaravati sculptures Mackenzie sent to London in 1819 are all in the British Museum. BM, 1880,0709.67; 1880,0709.70; 1880,0709.72; 1800,0709.79.
- 42 British Museum, 1880,0709.67.
- 43 Robert Knox, *Amaravati: Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stupa* (London: British Museum, 1992), 223.
- 44 British Museum, 1880,0709.79.
- 45 BL WD1061, f.11 is an undated drawing of BM 1880,0709.67. BL – WD1061, f.24 is a drawing by Marcellus Burke of BM 1880,0709.72 dated 10 October 1816.
- 46 British Museum, 1880,0709.70 and 72.
- 47 The Hedges Vishnu, Ashmolean Museum, LI894.12.
- 48 Jennifer Howes, "Illustrated Jain Collections in the British Library", in *Jaina Painting and Manuscript Culture*, ed. Julia Hegewald (Berlin: EB Verlag, 2015), 250–265.
- 49 Mackenzie's album of drawings from the excavation is titled, "Antiquities at Amrawutty 1816–1817". BL, WD1061.
- 50 Colin Mackenzie's "Memorandum on the Means of Procuring Historical Materials ...", Madras, 14 February 1808. National Library of Scotland, Ms 8955, 212.
- 51 Peter Robb, "Completing 'Our Stock of Geography' or an Object 'Still More Sublime': Colin Mackenzie's Survey of Mysore, 1799–1810", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 8, no. 2 (1998): 188–189.
- 52 These are now in the V&A's collections in London. V&A, 435(IS), 540(IS), 555(IS), 616(IS), 644(IS), 647(IS), 856(IS) and 871(IS).
- 53 Moor, *Hindu Pantheon*, 11, 420. Wilkins' zinc figurines are in the V&A London. V&A, 563(IS), 583(IS), 584(IS), 585(IS), 588(IS), 589(IS), 590(IS), 591(IS), 681(IS), 911(IS), 912(IS), 913(IS).
- 54 Thirteen are in the British Museum's collections. See note 63.
- 55 Francis Taylor, *Report on the Elliot Marbles* (Madras: Asylum Press, 1856).
- 56 William Henry Sykes, "Notes on the Religious, Moral, and Political State of India before the Mahomedan Invasion", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1842): 248–450. Also published as a book (London: F.W. Calder) in 1841.
- 57 Sykes, "Notes", 448–449.
- 58 Court Minutes, 4 December 1844. BL, IOR/B/209, 175.
- 59 Most of Gill's paintings were destroyed by fire in 1866. Those that survived are in the V&A (IS.52-1885 to IS.55-1885)
- 60 Upinder Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 55.
- 61 Alexander Cunningham, "Biography of Markham Kittoe", in *Archaeological Survey of India: Four Reports Made During the Years 1862–63–64–65* (New Delhi: Indological Book House, 1972), vol.1, xxiv–xxviii.
- 62 John Anderson, *Catalogue and Handbook of the Archaeological collections in the Indian Museum* (Kolkata, 1883), vol. 2, 70.
- 63 These are now in the British Museum. BM 1880.1, 1880.6, 1880.7, 1880.12, 1880.13, 1880.14, 1880.26, 1880.80, 1880.144, 1880.147, 1880.231, 1880.234, 1880.237, 1880.3588, 1880.3724.



- 64 Seven sculptures in the British Museum appear in the British Library's Kittoe Albums. BL, WD2876, 5, 16, 28, 32 and WD2877, 36.
- 65 For drawings by Kittoe of these two sculptures, see BL, WD2877, 36 and WD2876, 5.
- 66 For example, BM 1880.231 is a fragment from Kurkihar.
- 67 C. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum* (Chennai: Government Press, 1942).
- 68 Walter Elliot to the Commissioner's Office, 23 November 1854. BL, IOR F/4/2648, #172608, 21–22.
- 69 Balfour to H.C. Montgomery, Chief Secretary at Fort St George, 18 January 1854. BL, IOR P/249/27, 1136–1137.
- 70 The Murugesan Mudaliar drawings are in the British Library. BL, WD2242–2283.
- 71 Jennifer Howes, "The Colonial History of Sculptures from Amaravati Stupa", in *Buddhist Stupas in South Asia*, ed. Jason Hawkes and Akira Shimada (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.
- 72 The Elgin Marbles are today more commonly known as the Parthenon Marbles.
- 73 Madras Board's Collections, 1855–56. BL, IOR F/4/2648, #172608, p. 89.
- 74 Their arrival in London is often misdated. See page 6, note 17 in Shimada, 2013.
- 75 Singh, *Discovery*, 55.
- 76 Anonymous, *The Curiosities of London; Containing a Descriptive Sketch of the British Metropolis* (London: T. Tegg, 1810).
- 77 Library Committee Report, 16 July 1817. BL, Mss Eur F121/8.
- 78 For plans of East India Company warehouses in 1806 see BL, IOR/H/763B.
- 79 C Montgomery Martin, *History of the Possessions of the Honourable East India Company, Volume 2* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1837), table 1.
- 80 Makepeace, *East India Company's London Workers*, 40.
- 81 Makepeace, *East India Company's London Workers*, 72–3.
- 82 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 27–31.
- 83 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 30.
- 84 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 28, 38.
- 85 J.W. Kaye, "The House that John Built", *Cornhill Magazine* 2 (1860): 112–113. Quoted in Makepeace, *East India Company's London Workers*, 73.
- 86 Desmond, *The India Museum*, ch. 1 and 2.
- 87 *The Monthly Magazine*, January 1798, frontispiece and 57; BL, P2198.
- 88 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 29–30.
- 89 For a new study of the India Museum's peripatetic existence see Tara Kuruvilla, *Disjecta Membra: The Dispersal and Afterlife of the India Museum*. PhD Thesis, Columbia University, New York (pending completion, 2024?).
- 90 "The Indian Collection". *The Times*, 7 May 1909, 11–12.
- 91 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 202–203.
- 92 Calculated from plans of East India House. BL, IOR/H/763.
- 93 East India Company, *The East India Museum; A Description of the Museum and Library of the Honourable East India Company, Leadenhall Street* (London: H G Clarke, 1851), introduction.
- 94 East India Company, *The East India Museum*, 14.

## BUREAUCRACY

In the nineteenth century, the East India Company commissioned eight artworks in London. Six of them were installed inside its headquarters on Leadenhall Street, while the other two were memorial sculptures for places of worship. All eight of them were portraits of men associated with the Company, but the actions of these men, and the reasons why they were memorialised, were significantly different from the commissions of the eighteenth century. This chapter looks at where these eight objects were displayed and asks how their locations related to the Company's image. All the nineteenth-century commissions were marble sculptures except for one, an oil painting that was placed in the Committee of Correspondence Room, a space that was already filled with oil paintings, mainly dating from the eighteenth century. As for the sculptures, two were memorials, three were statues for the General Court Room, and two were busts for the Company's reading room.

This chapter is structured according to the locations of these eight artworks. It begins by looking at the two memorial sculptures that were placed inside public places of worship. Next, it moves through two semi-private areas of East India House where five of the sculptures were placed. These were the Oriental Repository's reading room and the General Court Room. It ends by looking at the innermost room of East India House, the Committee of Correspondence Room, where the one painting that was commissioned in the nineteenth century was installed. It was in this room, which has received little scholarly attention, that the Company's most private business was conducted. This progression from public to private space is a helpful way to understand the artworks. When paired with their locations, the objects provide a new way of considering how the Company's operations and self-image changed in the final decades of its existence.

### The memorials

Two of the eight commissioned artworks were displayed beyond East India House, inside Westminster Abbey and St George's Church Bloomsbury. The first to be commissioned was Westminster Abbey's memorial to Edward Cooke, the young commander of a British ship who died in May 1799 at Calcutta. It was sculpted by John Bacon the Younger, whose father made the statue of Charles Cornwallis in the General Court Room, the tympanum on the façade of East India House and the memorial to Sir William Jones in Westminster Abbey. [Figures 3.7, 3.9 and 3.10]

The memorial to Edward Cooke, the 27-year-old commander of the ship *Sybil*, was completed in 1806 and commemorated the young man's unexpected engagement in battle on 1 March 1799 with a French Frigate at the mouth of the River Hughli. He sustained mortal injuries during the battle and died two months later. His family asked the Company to erect a monument in his memory, and the Court of Directors chose to honour the request by commissioning the memorial in February 1800.<sup>1</sup>

Twenty-five years later, the East India Company commissioned John Bacon the Younger to sculpt the memorial to Charles Grant inside St George's Church, Bloomsbury.<sup>2</sup> [Figure 4.14] Grant had served the Company as an administrator in Bengal from 1769 to 1790, then in 1794, after his return to London, he was made a director. He held the posts of Chairman and Assistant Chairman on six occasions between 1804 and 1815. He was an evangelical Christian, a social reformer, and a pacifist who opposed territorial expansion in South Asia and advocated missionary activities, particularly the opening of Christian schools in India. Grant believed that the East India Company needed to organise an administration that would facilitate social reform in India. Because Britain's government echoed Grant's attitudes at that time, his placement on the East India Company's Court of Directors was most likely enforced by Parliament. His life and career could not have been more different from that of Edward Cooke.

There are many compositional similarities between Bacon's memorials to Grant and Cooke. Both men sit semi-recumbent with their legs, dressed in the same style of breeches and shoes, extending to the left. They respectively rest on props draped with fabric that are indicative of their lives; Cooke rests on a cannon beside an anchor and rope, and there is a ship's mast above his head. Grant rests against a desk upon which there are books, an ink well and a quill pen. Cooke extends his right arm leftward and is supported by a man clothed in classical drapery. Grant is supported by a similarly dressed angel who extends her arm leftward, while her other arm holds a cross high above Grant's head, in the same location as the ship's mast in the Cooke sculpture. Both compositions feature a hovering celestial. Above Cooke there is an angel carrying a palm frond and a laurel wreath, while a putti flies above Grant, holding a crown.

The details in these compositionally similar memorials are what make them different. Edward Cooke's memorial is surrounded by objects alluding to his death in India, while Grant sits amongst the books that were symbolic of his work as a social reformer in London. The locations of the memorials further emphasise their identities. Charles Grant's memorial is inside his parish church, St. George's Bloomsbury, which actively took part in the Church of England's "civilizing mission" in the early nineteenth century, offering practical services to Londoners such as a soup kitchen and library, and providing help to nearby schools. As for Edward Cooke's memorial, its location inside Westminster Abbey audaciously emphasises his death as a hero. It backs onto one of the Abbey's most famous eighteenth-century monuments, Joseph Wilton's memorial to Major-General James Wolfe, the celebrated martyr-soldier who died in 1759 on Quebec's Plains of Abraham at the age of 32. Wilton's politically charged memorial to Wolfe is often seen as a paradigm for the nationalist emotions that were aroused in Britain by the events of the Seven Years' War.<sup>3</sup> The Wolfe memorial was paid for by the House of Commons at the insistence of William Pitt the Elder, and in so doing, it came to represent Pitt's public agenda, showing Wolfe as "a modern man imbued with



Figure 6.1. Memorial to Edward Cooke by John Bacon the Younger, 1806. © Dean and Chapter of Westminster.



the legacy of the Ancients”.<sup>4</sup> The placement of the East India Company’s memorial in such intimate proximity to Wilton’s monument to Wolfe, with the two memorials physically touching each other, was an attempt to associate Edward Cooke’s death with the politically charged patriotism associated with Wolfe.

In 1800, when the Company commissioned John Bacon the Younger to make Edward Cooke’s memorial for Westminster Abbey,<sup>5</sup> it was unthinkable that a pacifist evangelical Christian administrator, regardless of his rank within the Leadenhall Street establishment, would also be the subject of a Company funded memorial. However, 25 years later, the same sculptor was commissioned to make Grant’s memorial, conveying the belief that the Company had a duty to control India through the implementation of British morals.<sup>6</sup> The different agendas of the two memorials – one military and the other bureaucratic – show how much the East India Company’s image changed in a quarter of a century. As will be seen, the other commissioned artworks from this period, and the places where they were installed, indicate the same kinds of changes.

### The reading room

The newest area of East India House to receive commissioned artworks in the early nineteenth century was the Oriental Repository’s reading room. It opened just after December 1801<sup>7</sup> and was housed inside a long, north-facing room on the second floor, behind Richard Jupp and Henry Holland’s imposing, north-facing entrance façade, on Leadenhall Street.<sup>8</sup> Inside this room, books and manuscripts, “together with any articles of curiosity that can be collected tither at the house or Warehouses”, were made accessible to researchers.<sup>9</sup> [Figure 5.3] Two of the Company’s nineteenth-century commissions were made for display in the reading room.

Charles Wilkins (1749–1836) was appointed to run the Oriental Repository in 1801 and held the post for 35 years later. At the time of his appointment, he was one of Britain’s most famous Orientalist scholars. He began his career in Bengal, where he studied Persian, Bengali, and Sanskrit while employed by the Company as a writer. In 1781, through Warren Hastings’s support, he became the first European to publish an English translation of a Sanskrit inscription.<sup>10</sup> In 1785 he published the first English translation of the Bhagavad Gita, making him a recognised Orientalist scholar throughout Europe. In 1786, after 15 years in India, Wilkins returned to England, most likely intending to lead a comfortable life as a gentleman scholar. However, in 1796 his house in Kent was destroyed by fire and his wife died from injuries sustained in the blaze.<sup>11</sup> After this tragedy, Wilkins contacted his friend Warren Hastings, who rallied for the Court of Directors to put him in charge of its new museum and library.<sup>12</sup> In February 1801, Wilkins was hired at a salary of £200 per year to run the Oriental Repository,<sup>13</sup> and remained in this post until his death in 1836, when he was about 87 years old.

The reading room, located directly above and behind the building’s Leadenhall Street entrance, was a high-ceilinged, rectangular room with a curved south wall. It measured approximately 58 feet long by 22 feet wide and had windows along its long north and south sides.<sup>14</sup> [Figure 5.3, C] The Court of Directors commissioned two marble portrait busts for display in the reading room. A third bust, part of a manuscript

bequest from Robert Orme, was also placed in the Oriental Repository's library. Orme was the Company's official historian, who died in January 1801, a few months before the Oriental Repository opened. He arranged through the bequest for his bust, along with all his manuscripts, to be deposited in the library.<sup>15</sup> Furnishing libraries with busts of notable founders, collectors, and authors was a popular convention in the British Isles from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, with perhaps the finest example of this kind of decor being the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.<sup>16</sup>

In 1815 the first marble portrait bust was commissioned for the reading room. It was of Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, who began his military career in India during the Fourth Mysore War. Commissioned immediately after Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, the bust by Peter Turnerelli was completed on 11 October of that year.<sup>17</sup> It cost "£157.10s" and was "delivered agreeably to order and placed in the Company's Library".<sup>18</sup> It is curious that the first bust to be commissioned for the reading room by the Court of Directors was of a war hero rather than a manuscript collector. The reason behind this seemingly unusual decision partially relates to Arthur Wellesley's rising popularity after the Battle of Waterloo, but it also relates to his connection with some of the library's Persian manuscripts.

During the Fourth Mysore War (1798–1799), long before he became the Duke of Wellington, Major-General Arthur Wellesley was famous for being the attractive younger brother of Richard Colley Wellesley, the Company's Governor General at Fort William from 1798 to 1805. Richard sent his younger brother to Srirangapatna during the Fourth Mysore War, after which Arthur was placed in charge of shutting down the sultanate establishment left behind after Tipu Sultan's death. Thousands of people, particularly Tipu's family and courtiers, were displaced,<sup>19</sup> and his palace was looted. The dead king's private library was dismembered, with Arthur Wellesley arranging with his British colleagues at Mysore, William Popham and Barry Close, to transport a large part of it to Calcutta.<sup>20</sup> Approximately 2,000 manuscripts were sent, along with an assortment of objects, to Richard Wellesley at Fort William Calcutta. In 1806, 197 of the manuscripts from Tipu Sultan's library were shipped from Calcutta to the Oriental Repository's library in London.<sup>21</sup> When the bust of the Duke of Wellington was commissioned, less than a decade had passed since the Oriental Repository had received the consignment of 197 manuscripts from Tipu Sultan's private library. These were delivered by Richard Colley Wellesley's manservant,<sup>22</sup> along with a full-length portrait of Fath Ali Shah of Persia by Mirza Baba.<sup>23</sup>

Richard Wellesley, the elder brother of the future Duke of Wellington, returned to Britain in 1806, having resigned from the position of Governor General in 1805. While at Fort William Calcutta, he had flagrantly competed with the Company's Leadenhall Street establishment to control numerous East India Company affairs and repeatedly infuriated the Court of Directors with his unbridled spending on projects of his own choosing. One of the schemes he spearheaded in Calcutta without the Court of Directors' permission was the creation of the College at Fort William. It had a well-stocked library and was where Tipu Sultan's manuscripts from Srirangapatna were sent after the Fourth Mysore War. In 1798, when the Court of Directors decided to establish the Oriental Repository inside London's East India House, Richard Wellesley was ordered to send the contents of the unauthorised College Library at Fort William to London.<sup>24</sup> Richard Wellesley ignored this order, and the directors in



*Figure 6.2.* Bust of Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, by Peter Turnerelli, 1815. British Library, Foster 572. Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

London complained “of a want of exertion [from Richard Wellesley] in furnishing Eastern Manuscripts for the Oriental Repository at the India House”.<sup>25</sup> When Richard Wellesley arrived in London in 1806, instead of confronting the Company’s directors, he arranged for a servant to deliver the 197 volumes from Tipu Sultan’s private library to East India House. It was an important consignment of manuscripts that became the core of the Oriental Repository’s Persian collections, but it was only a fraction of the items from Tipu’s library that had been sent to Fort William. The Court of Directors couldn’t possibly honour Richard Wellesley, a man who had been a thorn in their sides, and who only partially completed the task of transferring manuscripts from Calcutta to London.

By 1815, Arthur Wellesley, now the Duke of Wellington, was a national hero following the Battle of Waterloo. The Court of Directors seized the opportunity to honour this famous, respectable war hero by connecting him with the largest single collection of Persian manuscripts to have entered the Oriental Repository in the early nineteenth century. In 1815, about half of the Company’s directors had held seats a decade earlier, during Richard Colley Wellesley’s unruly term as Governor General. Commissioning a bust of his dashing younger brother, the decorated veteran of the Fourth Mysore War who had originally transported the manuscripts to Calcutta, was an acceptable way to commemorate the entry of Tipu’s manuscripts into the Oriental Repository, whilst, at the same time, honouring the nation’s victory at Waterloo.

The other bust commissioned for the library by the Court of Directors was of Henry Thomas Colebrooke,<sup>26</sup> the prolific Sanskrit scholar who gave his collection of manuscripts to the Oriental Repository in 1819.<sup>27</sup> His connection with the Oriental Repository was much more concrete, with the Colebrooke Collection being the “back-bone” of the Oriental Repository’s Sanskrit holdings.<sup>28</sup> To show their high regard for the donation, the Company’s directors asked Colebrooke to sit for a portrait by the sculptor, Francis Chantrey, so that a bust could be “placed in the Company’s Library, as an appropriate accompaniment to the Collection of Oriental Manuscripts lately presented by him to the Court”.<sup>29</sup> Colebrooke’s bust was completed in 1820 at a cost of 120 guineas, and was placed in the part of the library where the Colebrooke Collection was kept.<sup>30</sup>

In a published description of the Oriental Repository’s reading room dated 1851, none of the portrait busts are mentioned. Instead, it describes the “first object that arrests the visitor’s attention” as a large painting, depicting a hunt, positioned on the right side when one entered the room, of Fath Ali Shah of Persia on horseback with his 24 sons.<sup>31</sup> The hunting scene was a gift from Fath Ali Shah to King George IV, who it seems placed little value on the painting. It measures over five metres wide, and three and a half meters tall, making it the largest painting inside East India House. Perhaps George IV saw it was a personal criticism of his virility. He never produced a legitimate male heir, so a painting of the Persian Shah in the company of his 24 male offspring might have been regarded as an inappropriate topic for a gift. In 1816, he gave the painting to the East India Company, and the Committee of Correspondence handed it over to the Oriental Repository for display in the reading room.<sup>32</sup> Over a century later, the very same painting was sent to New Delhi, and installed in the ballroom ceiling of Edwin Lutyens’s newly constructed Viceroy’s House, known today as the Ashok Hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan.<sup>33</sup>



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*Figure 6.3.* Bust of Henry Thomas Colebrooke by Francis Chantrey, 1820. British Library, Foster 435. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



*Figure 6.4.* Portrait of Fath Ali Shah by Abdallah Khan, c.1820. Presented to the East India Company by Edward Mathews on behalf of the Shah, 1823. British Library, Foster 38. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.





*Figure 6.5.* Portrait of Nadir Shah, c.1740. Presented to the East India Company by Nicholas Vansittart in 1822. British Library, Foster 44. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

Another two large oil paintings by Persian artists, also showing Persian kings, were displayed high up on the reading room's walls. These were of Fath Ali Shah seated in state and Nadir Shah, the king responsible for the sacking of Delhi in 1739. They were both presented to the East India Company by British men. Edward Mathews brought the portrait of Fath Ali Shah to London in 1823, having just returned from Persia. He presented it to the Court of Directors, who arranged its transfer to the library's reading room on 2 August 1823.<sup>34</sup> The portrait of Nadir Shah was a gift from Nicholas Vansittart, who had never travelled to the East. It came to him through his father, Henry Vansittart, who was the Governor of Bengal in the 1760s. Nicholas Vansittart was the Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1812 to 1823, under Prime Minister Robert Jenkinson, the Earl of Liverpool. He gave the portrait of Nadir Shah to the Company on 22 February 1827, five days after the Prime Minister became mortally ill from a cerebral haemorrhage. Perhaps this offering was an attempt by Nicholas Vansittart to enhance his private business connections with the Company when he realised that the Prime Minister's term was coming to an inconspicuous end. The Court of Directors accepted the portrait and ordered it to be placed in the library.<sup>35</sup>

In the early nineteenth century the Oriental Repository held many important Persian language collections. These three Imperial Persian portraits, displayed high up on the reading room's walls, were visible references to the library's contents. Besides the 197 manuscripts from Tipu Sultan's library, the Company had also acquired Richard Johnson's impeccable collection of Persian and Mughal paintings and manuscripts in 1807.<sup>36</sup> The large oil-on-canvas portraits from Persia on the reading room's walls would have been just as appropriate décor as the marble portrait busts of Robert Orme, Arthur Wellesley, and Henry Thomas Colebrooke.

### The General Court Room

East India House's General Court Room was the other semi-private area of East India House to receive newly commissioned artworks in the nineteenth century. This was the room where the Company's Court of Proprietors held its meetings four to five times a year, so its shareholders could collectively vote on Company business. The agendas for these meetings were set in advance by the Court of Directors and included tasks such as the voting in of new directors and any distribution of Company funds that exceeded a certain amount.<sup>37</sup> The Court of Proprietors' role was to affirm the Court of Directors' actions, and not to overturn their decisions. The room where they met, constructed in the 1730s as part of Theodor Jacobsen's East India House, originally operated as the Company's Sale Room, where goods imported from the East were auctioned to London's merchants. It was a large, high-ceilinged room, measuring over 50 feet long and almost 50 feet wide. In the late 1790s, as part of the renovations to East India House, a separate Sale Room was constructed, and although the General Court Room lost this secondary function, it was still sometimes referred to as the "Old Sale Room" in the nineteenth century. High up along the General Court Room's curved west wall, there were niches containing full height marble statues of key men in the Company's history. [Figure 3.6] The first of these statues, commissioned in the eighteenth century, were of Robert Clive, George Pocock, Stringer Lawrence, Charles Cornwallis, and Eyre Coote. [Figures 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7 and 4.7] In the nineteenth



century, these five statues were joined by those of Warren Hastings, [Figure 4.12] Richard Colley Wellesley, and Arthur Wellesley.

The General Court Room had two entrances. The entrance used by public shareholders was at the east-facing side of the room, opposite the statues. Immediately inside of this door there was a gallery where members of the public could stand and



*Figure 6.6.* Statues of Richard Colley Wellesley by Henry Weekes (1842) and Arthur Wellesley by Matthew Noble (1855). British Library, Foster 242 and 241. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.

watch proceedings. In the centre of the General Courtroom there were rows of seats that faced west, towards the curved front wall, where the Company's directors presided over these meetings. The marble statues of East India Company notables loomed above the directors and faced the shareholders. For a shareholder to acquire the right to vote in a Court of Proprietors meeting, one simply had to own enough East India Company stock. In 1826, anyone holding £500 worth of stock could attend the Court of Proprietors' quarterly meetings. Those holding a minimum of £1,000 in stock could cast one vote, and those holding £10,000 or more could cast a maximum of four votes.<sup>38</sup> Besides voting on important issues, General Courts gave shareholders an opportunity to pose questions to the Court of Directors and request copies of documents to assist with discussions. The Chairman of the Court of Directors presided over the Court of Proprietors' meetings, which were considered "similar to that used in the House of Commons ... Questions in General Courts are usually decided in the first instance by shew of hands, of the result of which the chairman is to judge".<sup>39</sup>

Below the statues on the curved west wall, next to where the directors sat during the Company's quarterly meetings, was the other doorway that led into the General Court Room. This was the private entrance used by the Company's directors, which led into the Directors' Court Room. Unlike the General Court Room, which received new statues between the 1760s and 1855, the perfectly cubical Directors' Court Room was a conservative space that hadn't been altered since it was designed in by Theodor Jacobsen in the early eighteenth century. When the two Court Rooms were first used, the Court of Directors held ultimate power over the East India Company's affairs and was decorated with symbols of maritime power. Michael Rysbrack's marble overmantle of Britannia receiving riches was installed above the fireplace [Figure 1.12] and the six seascapes by George Lambert and Samuel Scott [Figures 1.13 to 1.18] covered the other three walls. A century later, its décor was unchanged, yet the directors were a completely different set of men. The merchants who presided over the Directors' Court Room in the 1730s were replaced by men who made money through the Company's imperialist bureaucracy.

Every year, the Court of Proprietors was responsible for approving the election of new directors. There were 24 seats on the Court of Directors, and because the seats could only be occupied for a four-year term, six new seats would usually become available each year. For a while in the late eighteenth century, the voting in of new directors became a disruptive force, with rival factions of the Court of Proprietors frequently ousting and reinstating those who represented their interests.<sup>40</sup> By 1800 the Court of Proprietors was less disruptive, and directors generally served a full four-year term, after which they stood down for a year before re-standing for election. The directors set the agendas for the Court of Proprietors' meetings, so the voting in of new directors "was largely restricted in so far as the directors usually contrived to ensure support for the return of their six colleagues once they had retired for a year".<sup>41</sup> The Court of Proprietors could only vote for candidates whose names were put forward by the directors, so the shareholders' votes merely affirmed decisions that had already been made.<sup>42</sup>

One of the few instances in the nineteenth century when the proprietors rejected a pre-appointed decision was on 22 September 1818. Following Warren Hastings's death in August of that year, the Court of Directors put forward a motion to commission

a statue of him for the General Court Room. Charles Grant, one of the directors, led a rebellion to block his colleagues' decision,<sup>43</sup> leading the Court of Proprietors to reject the commission.<sup>44</sup> Two years later, with Grant's four-year term as a director coming to an end, the Court of Proprietors reversed its decision, voting unanimously to commission the statue.<sup>45</sup> In April 1823, John Flaxman completed the Hastings statue at a cost of one thousand pounds. [Figure 4.12] It had been 25 years since a new statue had been placed in the Company's General Courtroom, with Warren Hastings's addition preceded by Charles Cornwallis's statue in 1798. Hastings and Cornwallis were the two leading figures of administrative reform at Calcutta in the late eighteenth century<sup>46</sup> so it made a degree of sense that the two statues were commissioned one after the other, even though they were made 25 years apart.

The next sculpture to be commissioned for the General Courtroom was of Richard Colley Wellesley. Thirty-five years had passed since he returned to England after his legendarily expensive term as Governor General at Calcutta from 1798 to 1805. Richard Wellesley was now over 80 years old and had outlived the generation of East India Company directors who had fought to have him removed from Fort William's college library. In the decades following his return to Britain, he had served in several distinguished government posts, and his younger brother, now the Duke of Wellington, had served twice as Prime Minister. On 10 March 1841 the Court of Directors resolved that a statue of "the Most Noble the Marquis Wellesley ... be placed in the General Court Room of this House as a public, conspicuous and permanent mark of the admiration and gratitude of the East India Company".<sup>47</sup> The Court of Proprietors unanimously passed the resolution to commission the sculpture, and when informed of their decision,<sup>48</sup> Richard Wellesley saw himself as vindicated for his extravagant efforts in India that had once infuriated the Company's establishment in Leadenhall Street. He wrote,

Great and Just God! Whom in serving my country I have ever served faithfully! Thanks be to the Almighty Power which has preserved my life to receive this consummation of human glory! After forty years of trial I have the satisfaction of knowing that my service has been highly beneficial to my Country, and that its benefits are fully felt and acknowledged by those best qualified a judge of them – My Masters the East India Company.<sup>49</sup>

Richard Wellesley's statue was completed by Henry Weekes at a cost of £1,800 and was installed in the General Courtroom in 1845, after being exhibited in the Royal Academy that year.<sup>50</sup> Its installation was so heartily supported by Parliament that a model of it was exhibited at Westminster Hall in June 1844 when the Royal Commission of Fine Arts was deciding how to decorate the new Houses of Parliament.<sup>51</sup>

The final statue to be commissioned for display in the General Courtroom was of Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, who died on 14 September 1852. By 20 October of that year, the Court of Directors had resolved

unanimously that, as a testimonial of the gratitude with which the East India Company must ever remember that the glorious career of the late Duke of

Wellington was commenced in India, and that the consolidation of the British Power was greatly promoted by his brilliant achievements, a Marble Statue of that illustrious Commander be placed in the General Court Room, and that this Resolution be submitted for the approbation of the Court of Proprietors.

A special General Court was called on 27 October 1852, and the Court of Proprietors voted to proceed with the commission.<sup>52</sup> In November 1852 Matthew Noble began the sculpture,<sup>53</sup> which was completed and installed in East India House's General Courtroom in September 1855, at a cost of £1,200.<sup>54</sup>

Because Arthur Wellesley served in India during the Fourth Mysore War, the East India Company recognised him as one of its own men. This connection was vigorously re-substantiated as Wellesley rose in popularity, first as the military hero who overthrew Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, and then later when he became Prime Minister. At the Duke of Wellington's funeral on 18 November 1852, the East India Company was invited to hold a place of honour in the procession to St Paul's Cathedral. The Company was permitted to send

a Deputation (in one carriage) which may consist of four persons or less, as may be thought proper; and that seats will also be provided in the Cathedral Church of St Pauls' for those of the Court not forming part of the Deputation.<sup>55</sup>

An estimated million and a half people watched the Duke of Wellington's funeral procession, making it the largest event to be witnessed in many people's lifetimes.<sup>56</sup> His funeral and the commissioning of the sculpture for the General Court Room both happened in November 1852. The awesome scale of the funeral and the East India Company's participation in this event must have made the completion of the sculpture a pressing issue.

By 1855 the General Court Room was decorated with seven marble portrait sculptures that stared down upon the shareholders as reminders of the East India Company's history from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. There was a clear divide between the statues commissioned in the eighteenth century and those from the nineteenth century. The earliest ones were of military leaders, with the statue of Charles Cornwallis from the 1790s signalling a transition from soldier to administrator. The statues that followed in the nineteenth century were all conspicuously of politicians. Warren Hastings, the first Governor General at Fort William, had none of the military associations of the earlier statues. Along with Charles Cornwallis, Hastings led several administrative reforms at Calcutta in the late eighteenth century. The statues of Richard Wellesley and Arthur Wellesley, both of whom served as politicians at Westminster, reflected the Company's association with Parliament by the mid-nineteenth century.

### **The Committee of Correspondence Room**

At the south end of East India House's ground floor, far away from its north-facing entrance, was the Committee of Correspondence Room. Of all the working areas in East India House, this room contained the most paintings. Located down a corridor to the south of the Directors' Court Room, the artworks displayed on its walls changed



several times in the early nineteenth century. The kinetic nature of its displays made it unusual. In this room, a select group of the Company's highest-ranking directors, along with an elite secretarial staff, would meet to discuss the Company's day-to-day financial matters, and to set the agendas for the Court of Directors' meetings. The Committee of Correspondence ensured that the Company's most powerful directors controlled its detailed functions.

The Committee of Correspondence was "the most important of the Company's twelve or so regular committees. Membership on the Committee was primarily allotted to individual Directors on the basis of seniority".<sup>57</sup> They were always high-ranking individuals who sat on the Court of Directors.<sup>58</sup> The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman oversaw this inner circle which usually included another six directors, usually who had previously held the post of chairman or deputy chairman. The Committee of Correspondence's role was to supervise incoming correspondence from India, and to scrutinise financial issues connected with this correspondence before responding to it.<sup>59</sup> The Company was not permitted to deal with any issues deemed political and the Committee of Correspondence's records describe a plethora of unremarkable decisions regarding the day-to-day running of the Company's affairs.<sup>60</sup> On closer examination, one can see that the seemingly small matters controlled by this elite committee included who travelled to and from Asia, the payment of pensions, the cashing of bonds, and the selection of ships for transporting cargoes. Other issues included the outcomes of lawsuits and claims, the running of East India College, and the procurement of equipment to be sent to India.<sup>61</sup> The Committee of Correspondence's power lay in it overseeing this vast sprawl of information. By being the "master of the facts scattered in a most voluminous correspondence",<sup>62</sup> they chose who received lucrative contracts and surreptitiously set many of the Company's most important policies.

When Parliament began eroding the East India Company's powers in the 1770s, and created the Board of Control in 1784, the men who ran the Committee of Correspondence were able to covertly exercise financial control over the more detailed arenas of the Company's operations. The Board of Control, founded by Parliament to regulate the Company's financial activities, couldn't manage every single corner of the Company's finances, and allowed the Committee of Correspondence to manage these detailed operations.<sup>63</sup> The Committee of Correspondence's importance increased because it made decisions that the Board of Control didn't scrutinise. This raised the Committee of Correspondence's significance within East India House, which was reflected by the artworks displayed in the room where it met.

The Committee of Correspondence also set agendas for the Court of Directors, and by setting these agendas, it ultimately wielded power over all the Company's decisions. According to an account authored in 1826, it was a "first class committee",<sup>64</sup> with the Company's Military Fund and Treasury serving underneath it. By 1834, when the East India Company had lost all its trade monopolies, the Committee of Correspondence was renamed the "Finance and Home Committee", but its role remained to oversee and control the Company's financial correspondence with India. Members of the Committee of Correspondence were perfectly placed to help others succeed in East India Company-related business. They could create or destroy the fortunes of others by selecting who received the Company's favour. They also had the power to grant or deny individual requests to cash Company bonds and release pensions. In some cases,

such as the circumstances surrounding Francis Swain Ward in 1764, the Committee of Correspondence could banish men from travelling to territories controlled by the East India Company. An individual could receive the East India Company's favour through the Committee of Correspondence's support, but those on its bad side could have their lives ruined.

The Committee of Correspondence's importance was also reflected by the high calibre of its support staff, particularly the writers it employed. These men were based in the East India Company's Examiner's Office and were responsible for drafting the replies to the letters the committee received from India. Most famously, the Head of the Examiner's office in the early nineteenth century was the historian James Mill (1773–1836). His son, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), succeeded him to the post and became Britain's most famous political economist in the nineteenth century. The replies sent out by the Examiner's Office were so important that its staff were praised as the administrative elite of East India House.<sup>65</sup>

Just like the Directors' Court Room and the General Court Room, the Committee of Correspondence Room was part of Theodor Jacobsen's building from the late 1730s. It was located to the south of the Directors' Court Room, beside a large open courtyard and the private offices of the Company's Chairman and the Deputy Chairman. The Committee of Correspondence Room may have lacked the symmetry and elegance of the Directors' Court Room, but its decor was far more dynamic than anywhere else in East India House. It went through at least three changes of display in the early nineteenth century, with a total of 16 large and extremely important oil paintings being on its walls between 1810 and 1826. In one account, the Committee of Correspondence Room was described as "the best room in the house, with the exception of the [Directors' and General] Court Rooms".<sup>66</sup> Aside from the writings of Martin Moir and Huw Bowen, the Committee of Correspondence has received sparse scholarly attention.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the paintings that decorated the room it occupied have never been examined as a set.

The first oil paintings to be recorded in the Committee of Correspondence Room were the ten landscapes by Francis Swain Ward.<sup>68</sup> They were installed immediately after their acquisition in 1773 inside matching frames, in imitation of the Directors' Court Room's six identically framed seascapes of George Lambert and Samuel Scott. The seascapes in the Directors' Court Room represented the Company's development into a maritime trading power in the early eighteenth century, while the Ward landscapes in the Committee of Correspondence Room represented the next major phase in the Company's development, when its armies began conquering inland territories. The Ward landscapes also represented the East India Company's activities before Parliament stepped in to control its affairs. In the same year that they were acquired, the East India Company became financially accountable to Parliament, when Lord North's Regulating Act was passed into law. In March 1773, whilst it was acquiring the ten landscapes directly from Francis Swain Ward, the East India Company was frantically petitioning Parliament not to pass the bill.<sup>69</sup>

At least half of Francis Swain Ward's landscapes were weeded out of the Committee of Correspondence Room in the early nineteenth century and were replaced by portraits.<sup>70</sup> By the early 1800s, three decades had passed since the Ward landscapes were acquired, and the generation of men who had first-hand knowledge of the Carnatic Wars and

of Lord North's Regulating Act were gone. Of the newly introduced portraits for the Committee of Correspondence Room, only one of them was a commission from the early nineteenth century. It was a painting by William Beechey of Mirza Abul Hasan Khan, the ambassador of Fath Ali Shah of Persia, who was sent to London in 1809. The Court of Directors commissioned the painting in 1809, and it was completed in early 1810, while Mirza Abul Hasan was still in London.<sup>71</sup> It was exhibited in the Royal Academy in early 1810 and was placed in the Committee of Correspondence Room later that same year.<sup>72</sup> Mirza Abul Hasan's mission to London related to Persia's role in the Napoleonic Wars. The East India Company was anxious that France's armies, which were threatening the British in several parts of the world, would invade India along an overland route. To do this, the French armies had to pass through Persia, so to block this possibility, the British struck an alliance with Fath Ali Shah.

Before he arrived in London, Mirza Abul Hasan already knew a great deal about the English, having socialised with them in both Persia and Calcutta. Upon his arrival, Sir Gore Ouseley met him and acted as his guide. Ouseley also worked closely with Richard Colley Wellesley, who, by 1809, was Britain's Foreign Secretary. Richard Wellesley needed to ensure the East India Company's safety from the French, so along with Ouseley, the two men did their utmost to choreograph Mirza Abul Hassan's time in London.<sup>73</sup> Ouseley successfully guided Mirza Abul Hasan through London society and, in the process, transformed him into a celebrity, while Richard Wellesley orchestrated the complicated business of the Persian ambassador having an audience with the United Kingdom's ailing and unpredictable monarch, George III.

The portrait of Mirza Abul Hasan was the final oil painting that the East India Company commissioned for display inside East India House. All the paintings that went into East India House afterwards were gifts rather than commissions, and all the artworks that were subsequently commissioned for London were sculptures. It is entirely possible that Richard Wellesley, with his love of pageantry and penchant for recording events through oil paintings, influenced the Court of Directors' decision to commission this portrait. William Beechey painted another portrait of Mirza Abul Hasan at the same time, showing the exotic sitter in the same outfit, but in a different pose.<sup>74</sup>

To make space for the portrait of Mirza Abul Hasan in 1810, three landscapes by Francis Swain Ward were moved out of the Committee of Correspondence Room and into the Oriental Repository.<sup>75</sup> Recorded as received in early 1810, the three landscapes were of the Rock Fort at Tiruchirappalli, [Figure 2.1] the view of Viralmalai, [Figure 2.4] and a third painting, described as the temple at Srirangam.<sup>76</sup> The set of ten Francis Swain Ward paintings in the Committee of Correspondence Room had now been broken up, with the remaining seven landscapes displayed alongside the full-length portraits of Naqd Ali Beg, Muhammad Ali Khan, Warren Hastings, Charles Cornwallis, Fath Ali Shah, and Mirza Abul Hasan.<sup>77</sup>

In April 1821, two more Francis Swain Ward landscapes were moved from the Committee of Correspondence Room to the Oriental Repository.<sup>78</sup> These were Ward's landscapes of choultries,<sup>79</sup> [Figures 2.5 and 2.6] both of which appear in an engraving published in 1843 of the gallery room on East India House's second floor.<sup>80</sup> [Figure 5.2] The paintings are shown hanging low on the left wall, on either side of a niche containing a black stone sculpture. Just like the paintings that were removed in 1810,



*Figure 6.7.* Portrait of Mirza Abul Hasan by William Beechey, 1810. British Library, Foster 26. Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board.



the two landscapes of choultries were removed to make space for another picture in the Committee of Correspondence Room. It was the massive court scene by Benjamin West, showing the historical moment in August 1765 when the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, signed the Treaty of Allahabad. Lord Edward Clive, the son of Robert Clive, gave the painting, which measures 290 centimetres tall and 400 centimetres across, to the East India Company. The gift was formally accepted by the directors on 25 October 1820.<sup>81</sup> [Figure 4.14] With the removal of two more Ward landscapes, the Committee of Correspondence Room was now dominated by portraiture.

Giving West's massive narrative painting to the East India Company was an intelligent thing for Edward Clive to do. Seventeen years had passed since he had been recalled from India, where he served as the Governor of Madras while Richard Colley Wellesley was Governor General. Edward Clive's gift was most likely an attempt to restore not just his but his father's reputation before the Company's directors. The timing of the gift was impeccable. In 1817, the historian James Mill published his book, *The History of British India*. This important work, authored by a man who had never been to Asia, was promoted by the Company as a seminal work because it justified the Company's nineteenth-century imperialist agenda. It also praised key moments of Robert Clive's career.<sup>82</sup> In 1819, after publishing his *History*, James Mill was appointed by the East India Company to the role of Assistant Examiner of Correspondence. When Edward Clive offered the painting of his father to the Company the following year, the subject matter of this unignorable painting had been woven into the revised narrative of Robert Clive's life, as described in Mill's *History*. This in turn led to Robert Clive's actions being reinterpreted by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 1840.<sup>83</sup>

After the two Ward landscapes were removed to make space for Benjamin West's painting in 1821, the arrangement of artworks in the Committee of Correspondence Room became fixed.<sup>84</sup> Its décor underwent a metamorphosis in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, with landscapes being replaced by portraits. The artworks were a barometer for changes within the Company, with pictures relating to territorial expansion being replaced by portraits of men fulfilling diplomatic roles. In 1773, Francis Swain Ward's ten landscapes, the room's main décor in the eighteenth century, were expressions of the territorial expansion achieved by the Company's private armies in the 1750s and 1760s. Three decades later, the Company was still expanding its control over the subcontinent, but these images of territorial gain, as shown in Ward's landscapes, were replaced by a new aesthetic centred around the actions of statesmen.

## Conclusion

It is possible to trace the East Indian Company's metamorphosis from a trading company to a bureaucratic agency of imperial rule in the early to mid-nineteenth century by looking at the small, distinct set of eight artworks commissioned by the Company in the nineteenth century. They are easily categorised according to the audiences who saw them. Their meanings are further expanded by looking at their locations, and the contexts generated by the other artworks they were displayed alongside of.

The two most public artworks in the set were the memorials dedicated to Edward Cooke in Westminster Abbey and Charles Grant in St George's Church Bloomsbury. Despite the compositional similarities between these two works by John Bacon the

Younger, they are poles apart, showing how much the East India Company changed over a 25-year period. The Edward Cook memorial eulogised a young man who died after a battle, celebrating him as a military hero. Perhaps to ensure his fame, Cooke's memorial was intimately placed directly behind the memorial to Major-General James Wolfe, one of the most famous monuments to a war hero in Westminster Abbey. By contrast, the memorial to Charles Grant celebrated the Company's development into an imperialist administration. It was placed inside his parish church, a centre for missionary activities in London that connected with his beliefs as an evangelical Christian. It is somewhat astonishing that two such different men were memorialised by the East India Company in the early nineteenth century.

Most of the sculpture commissions from the nineteenth century went into semi-public areas of East India House. The first of these was the reading room of the Oriental Repository, where books and archival items could be viewed, pending permission from the librarian, Charles Wilkins. The two commissioned sculptures for the reading room were both marble busts, one of Arthur Wellesley, and the other of Henry Thomas Colebrooke. Both busts connected with the provenance of its manuscript holdings. The other semi-public area of East India House to receive sculpture commissions was the General Court Room, where statues of Warren Hastings, Richard Wellesley, and Arthur Wellesley were placed between 1823 and 1855. The addition of these three statues to the General Court Room indicates a shift from the Company's military associations. Warren Hastings, the Company's first Governor General, was an administrator, as was his successor, Richard Wellesley. Arthur Wellesley began his career as a military man in India, but by the time of his death, when the statue of him was commissioned, he was far better known as a prime minister. By contrast, the five statues in the General Court Room from the eighteenth century were of military men who contributed to the East India Company's expansion, four of which were dressed as Roman generals.

The one oil painting that the Company commissioned in this period, the portrait of Mirza Abul Hasan that went into the Committee of Correspondence Room, symbolised the relationship between the East India Company, the Shah of Persia, and Britain's Foreign Office. Its placement inside the Committee of Correspondence Room led to the splitting up of the ten Francis Swain Ward landscapes, with at least half of them eventually being relocated to the Company's museum. The shuffling of the paintings inside this space, where the Company's highest ranking members controlled, amongst other things, the Court of Directors' agendas, indicates movement away from the military image the Company embraced in the late eighteenth century and the backing of diplomatic roles to justify the Company's existence.

The commissioned artworks of the early to mid-nineteenth century were significantly different from the Company's late-eighteenth-century paintings and sculptures. Aside from the earliest of the nineteenth century commissions, the memorial to the young yet unmemorable Edward Cooke, the Company's chosen subjects, all of them portraits, related to political imperatives it claimed to uphold. These portraits were all about reinventing the Company's image in line with its new obligation, to administer India on behalf of the home government. Once this shift in agency is pointed out, it is impossible to unsee it. Whilst conventional academic narratives might regard artworks like these simply as portraits, this chapter shows that they were a tool for recalibrating the East India Company's image.

## Notes

- 1 Letters from the Court of Directors, 10 February and 19 February 1800. BL, IOR/F/4/135/2442 and F/4/69/1564.
- 2 Committee of Correspondence, 26 January 1825. BL, IOR/D/136.
- 3 Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth Century British Empire* (Montreal: McGill, 2006), 109–135.
- 4 Douglas Fordham, *British Art and the Seven Years' War* (Philadelphia: Uni Penn Press, 2010), 109.
- 5 Court Minutes, 19 February 1800. BL, IOR/B/134, 1019.
- 6 Huw Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756–1833* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), 119.
- 7 Oriental Repository Day Books. BL, Mss Eur 303/35, frontispiece.
- 8 William Foster, *The East India House: Its History and Associations* (London: John Lane, 1924), 138–9.
- 9 Oriental Repository Day Books. BL, Mss Eur F303/35, entry at front of volume.
- 10 Charles Wilkins, “A Royal Land Grant Engraved on a Copper Plate”, *Asiatick Researches* 1 (1788): 123–130.
- 11 A.J. Arberry, *The Library of the India Office: A Historical Sketch* (London: Secretary of State for India, 1938), 56.
- 12 Letters from Charles Wilkins. BL, Mss Eur F18/1, 255–263.
- 13 BL, IOR/B/132, 1066; IOR/D/2, 18 February 1801. Arberry (*The Library*, 25) notes that some authors mistakenly inflated his salary to £1,000 per annum.
- 14 Plan of East India House's 2nd floor, 1805. BL, IOR/H763A, 17.
- 15 Bust of Robert Orme in plaster by Joseph Nollekens. BL, Foster 406. The bequest and bust are described in William Foster, *East India House*, 148; Mildred Archer, *The India Office Collection of Paintings and Sculpture* (London: The British Library, 1986), 100, #142.
- 16 Malcolm Baker, “The Portrait Sculpture”, in *The Making of the Wren Library*, ed. D. McKitterick (Cambridge: UP, 1995), 110–137.
- 17 Oriental Repository Day Book. BL, Mss Eur F303/2.
- 18 Court Minutes, 1 December 1815. BL, IOR/B/162, 789.
- 19 Jennifer Howes, “Tipu Sultan's Female Entourage under East India Company Rule”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 4 (2021), 855–874.
- 20 Arberry, *The Library*, 80–82.
- 21 Ehrlich, Joshua. “Plunder and Prestige: Tipu Sultan's Library and the Making of British India”. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2020), 478–492; Sims-Williams, Ursula. “Collections within Collections: An analysis of Tipu Sultan's Library”. *Iran* (2021): 287–307.
- 22 Arberry, *The Library*, 37.
- 23 BL, Foster 116. It was installed in the Committee of Correspondence Room.
- 24 Report on materials to be supplied to East India House by the College at Fort William. BL, IOR/H/489, 37–44; Arberry, *The Library*, 25, 32–33.
- 25 Report on materials to be supplied to East India House by the College at Fort William. BL, IOR/H/489, iii.
- 26 Henry Thomas Colebrooke was the son of Sir George Colebrooke, who served as both Chairman and Assistant Chairman of the East India Company between 1767 and 1772.
- 27 Court Minutes, 1819. BL, IOR/B/169, 32.
- 28 Arberry, *The Library*, 89–90.
- 29 Court Minutes, 1819. BL, IOR/B/169, 121.
- 30 Court Minutes, 1819. BL, IOR/B/169, 43.
- 31 East India Company. *The East India Museum: A Description of the Museum and Library of the Honourable East India Company, Leadenhall Street* (London: H.G. Clarke & Co, 1851), 8–9.
- 32 Oriental Repository Day Book, 28 March 1816. BL, Mss Eur F303/2.

- 33 Layla S. Diba, "An Encounter between Qajar Iran and the West: The Rashtrapati Bhavan Painting of Fath 'Ali Shah at the Hunt", in *Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Behrens-Abouseif, Doris (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 282–304.
- 34 Oriental Repository Day Book. BL, Mss Eur F303/3.
- 35 Court Minutes, 27 February 1827. BL, IOR/B/174, 900.
- 36 For more on the Johnson Collection see Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Park Bernet, 1981).
- 37 In the 1830s this amount was £600. Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the Possessions of the Honourable East India Company, Volume 2* (London: Whittaker & Co, 1837), 3.
- 38 Robert Montgomery Martin estimated that in 1832, 2,583 votes could be cast in a Court of Proprietors meeting. For a breakdown of who held these votes see Martin, *History of*, 2–3.
- 39 Auber, Peter. *Analysis of the Constitution of the East India Company*. (London: Kingsbury, Parbury & Allen, 1826), 349–352.
- 40 Bowen, *Business of Empire*, 68.
- 41 Martin Moir, *A General Guide to the India Office Records* (London: British Library, 1988), 25.
- 42 Moir, *General Guide*, 22.
- 43 *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India*, Volume 17, Jan–June 1824 (London), 73.
- 44 Court Minutes, 7 July 1819. BL, IOR/B/267, 103–104.
- 45 Court Minutes. BL, IOR/B/170, 1015–1017; IOR/B/267, 101–102.
- 46 Bowen, *Business of Empire*, 213.
- 47 Wellesley Papers. BL, Add.MS.37278, 238v.
- 48 Wellesley Papers. BL, Add.Ms.37278, 237.
- 49 Wellesley Papers, BL, Add.Ms. 37278, 231.
- 50 Mildred Archer, *The India Office Collection of Painting and Sculpture* (London: HMSO, 1986), 105–106.
- 51 Minute on a letter from Henry Weekes to the Court of Directors, 1 May 1844. BL, IOR/B/208, 51–52.
- 52 Court Minutes, 27 October 1852. BL, IOR/B/225, 20–21.
- 53 Court Minutes, November 1852. BL, IOR/B/227, 181.
- 54 Court Minutes, September 1855. BL, IOR/B/230, 1098.
- 55 Court Minutes, 1852. BL, IOR/B/225, 35–36.
- 56 Panorama of the Duke of Wellington's funeral procession. BL, H.S.74/1739.
- 57 Martin Moir, "The Examiner's Office: The Emergence of an Administrative Elite in East India House, 1804–1858", in *East India Company Studies*, ed. Kenneth Ballhatchet and John Harrison (Hong Kong: Asian Research Service, 1986), 26.
- 58 Auber, *Analysis of the Constitution*, 190; Moir, "The Examiner's Office". *India Office Library & Records. Report for the Year 1977* (London), 26.
- 59 Moir, *General Guide*, 26–27.
- 60 Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, 1784–1834. BL, IOR/D/1–17.
- 61 Margaret Makepeace, *The East India Company's London Workers: Management of the Warehouse Labourers, 1800–1858* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 12.
- 62 Letter from James Mill to Dumont, quoted in Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 48; Ainslie T. Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), 207.
- 63 Bowen, *Business of Empire*, 80–81.
- 64 Auber, *Analysis of the Constitution*, 183; Bowen, *Business of Empire*, 185–186.
- 65 Moir, "The Examiner's Office".
- 66 J.C. Platt, "The East India House", in *London*, ed. Charles Knight, Vol V (London: 1843), 62.
- 67 Moir, "The Examiner's Office", 26; Bowen, *Business of Empire*, 186.
- 68 See chapter two of this book.
- 69 Copies of petitions. BL, IOR/D/27 and D/28.
- 70 *European Magazine*, March 1803, 167–168.



- 71 Court Minutes. BL, IOR/B/150, 1471.
- 72 Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts. A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their work from its foundation in 1769 to 1904* (London: H Graves and Co., 1905), 1810, vol.1, 162.
- 73 Letters between Gore Ousley and Richard Wellesley.; Letter from Richard Wellesley to Mirza Abul Hasan, 20 December 1809. BL, Ms.37285, 211.
- 74 The other 1809–10 portrait of Mirza Abul Hasan is in Compton Verney Art Gallery (Ref: CVCSC:0358.B) Its provenance is unrecorded.
- 75 Committee of Correspondence Minutes, 15 January 1810. BL, IOR/D/3.
- 76 Oriental Repository's Day Book. BL, F303/1, 80. The third painting could have been Foster 27 [Figure 2.2] or 30 [Figure 2.3].
- 77 These were the portraits of Naqd Ali Beg (Foster 23), the nawab of Arcot (Foster 12), Warren Hastings (Foster 1), Charles Cornwallis (Foster 6), Mirza Abul Hasan (Foster 26), and the portrait of Fath Ali Shah which RC Wellesley brought to London in 1806 (Foster 116)
- 78 Museum Day Book, 28 April 1821. BL, IOR/D/7.
- 79 BL, Foster 14 [Figure 2.6] and Foster 22 [Figure 2.5].
- 80 Platt, "East India House", 63.
- 81 Court Minutes, 25 October 1820. BL, IOR/B/172, 655–656.
- 82 James Mill, *The History of British India* (London: James Madden, 1817), book 4, ch. 3 and 7.
- 83 Richard Goebelt, "The Memory of Lord Clive in Britain and Beyond", in *Sites of Imperial Memory* ed. D. Geppert and F. Muller (Manchester, 2015), 136–152.
- 84 Platt, "East India House", 62.

## CONTINUITIES

After the final collapse of its mercantile functions in 1833, the East India Company survived as an administrative entity inside East India House for a further three decades. Its reduced purpose inside such a grand building made it a source of ridicule. In the words of one disgruntled commentator in 1841,

This [East India] house is not old enough to be in a state of dilapidation; but its extent is so much beyond what is required for a mere government office, that it has a very deserted appearance ... on entering it, at any season of the year, and at any hour of the day, you encounter so many tea-trays in the passages, passing to and from the kitchen, that no doubt remains about its being a tavern.<sup>1</sup>

If not for the spread of the India Museum, which became an important way for the Company to publicly justify its existence, its continued inhabitation inside East India House might have been even more seriously questioned.

In some ways, it was appropriate to compare East India House with a tavern. It was an important meeting place in London for anyone associated with or interested in the East India Company. Its shareholders continued to attend quarterly meetings in the General Court Room, scholars consulted material in the Oriental Library's reading room, and curious onlookers wandered about the increasing number of rooms that were taken up by the India Museum. It was where news from South Asia was disseminated, so wealthy families with ties to India set up homes within a comfortable distance of Leadenhall Street, often in country estates in the "home counties", the picturesque countryside areas immediately outside of London, to ensure regular communication with the Company.<sup>2</sup> When East India House was demolished, and this meeting point for the Company's assorted functions was lost, its history slipped out of living memory.

Before its demolition, East India House contained the most varied accumulation of corporately collected artworks in the world. The sculptures and paintings that it housed all shared the same remarkable corporate provenance. The commissioned artworks by Western artists were mainly displayed inside East India House's rooms of business, such as the Directors' Court Room, the General Court Room, and the Committee of Correspondence Room. The oldest of these commissions, the portrait

of Naqd Ali Beg by Richard Greenbury of 1626, [Figure 1.3] was in the Committee of Correspondence Room, while the final object to be commissioned, the marble statue of the Duke of Wellington, completed by Matthew Noble in 1855, was in the General Court Room. [Figure 6.6] The India Museum, which by the time East India House closed covered approximately 8,700 square feet of the building, contained an unparalleled sprawl of exhibits about the subcontinent, including Indian sculptures that would later become the centrepieces of the British Museum's and V&A's South Asia collections. [Figures 5.5 to 5.10] In the years immediately after East India House's demolition, several of the India Museum's sculptures were displayed in the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867<sup>3</sup> and the International Exhibition at South Kensington in 1874.<sup>4</sup> East India House's Oriental Library remained a relatively uninterrupted centre of scholarship, moving temporarily into the old India Board offices in Cannon Row before it was moved to the new India Office building in Whitehall and renamed the India Office Library.<sup>5</sup>

### The problematic Company

When the East India Company lost its exclusive right to trade with India in 1813 and with China in 1833, it ceased to be a major commercial enterprise. Under the Charter Act of 1833, it had to relinquish its trade operations by April 1834. With its mercantile functions gone, it became a private contractor to the British state which oversaw the administration of India. When the East India Company's functions merged with the British state, its toxic associations with the 1857 Rebellion had to be purged. Known in Britain as the Indian Mutiny, this event catalysed the passing of the Government of India Act in August 1858, leading to the East India Company's liquidation, although it continued to exist until 1874 as "a corporate zombie, reduced to the most basic corporate task of all: the distribution of the annual dividend".<sup>6</sup> The India Office, the branch of Britain's government that absorbed the East India Company's functions, existed for nearly a century.

How were the events of the Indian Mutiny perceived in Britain? Immediately after 1857, artworks proliferated that showed locations where the British were killed such as the Residency at Lucknow and the "Memorial Well" at Kanpur. Oil paintings dramatised moments of intense emotion such as Joseph Noel Paton's painting *In Memoriam*, where a group of terrified British women and children are shown hiding in a basement from mutineers.<sup>7</sup> In London's Trafalgar Square, a statue, funded through public subscription was erected in honour of Henry Havelock, one of the purported heroes of the "Mutiny". British artworks about the Rebellion highlighted the violence perpetrated by Indians against British civilians and the heroics of British men that were perceived as stopping this violence. They simplistically demonised the mutinous sepoy soldiers as the violence's root cause. However, written coverage of the same events reported that "governors, residents and generals, and civil and military functionaries were at fault ... not one of them had ... a notion that one of the largest armies in the world was on the point of a general mutiny".<sup>8</sup> By losing control of its armies, the Company was branded as incapable of controlling India. The Company was abolished, but instead of leaving the subcontinent, Parliament made India into part of Britain's government and founded the India Office.

The East India Company's toxicity was amusingly described in three satirical letters, all published in 1858, titled the "Familiar Epistles of Mr John Company to Mr John Bull".<sup>9</sup> The East India Company, personified as "John Company", bombastically unaware of his caustic image, begins his first letter as a response to the leader of the House of Commons, who had denounced the East India Company as a corpse. John Company humorously contests this claim by saying,

I could show the right honourable gentleman how much vitality I have in me. I assure you that I do not feel at all the worse for the vote of the House of Commons. Nothing that others do to me can disgrace me. I can only disgrace myself.<sup>10</sup>

As for the East India Company's role in the Rebellion of 1857, John Company admits that "[a]trocities, which the soul sickens to contemplate, have been perpetrated by my soldiers".<sup>11</sup> He also describes the contents of the library and museum at East India House, saying that

[y]ou may examine all my books; you may put to me any questions that you like. If you will step into my new Museum, you may get a lively idea of the manners and customs of the people from an inspection of the clay figures there; and among them you may see models of the different modes of torture whereby I extract my revenue from the miserable rots.<sup>12</sup>

The letters portray John Company as an ignorant, corrupt psychopath who justifies his existence through his inhabitation of East India House. This satire demonstrates how crucial it was for Parliament to remove the East India Company from Britain's imperial image.

### Moving to the India Office

In 1860, the contents of the India Museum, along with the paintings and sculptures from the General Court Room, Directors' Court Room, and Committee of Correspondence Room, were moved to a temporary location in Whitehall called Fife House. For almost eight years, "many of those remarkable specimens of Indian sculpture which were formerly shown in the sculpture gallery of the India House" were displayed alongside "the marble statues of Wellington, Clive, Hastings, Coote, Wellesley and other military men".<sup>13</sup> In 1868, with the construction of the India Office complete, Fife House's contents were moved into the new building.<sup>14</sup> Western paintings and sculpture were installed in corridors, landings and offices, while the India Museum's collections were moved into a cluster of rooms on the third floor, on the King Charles Street side of the building.<sup>15</sup> The move to the India Office also included the transfer of many East India Company staff, who had been selected in 1858 as employees for the new India Office.<sup>16</sup>

The India Museum's cramped location in the India Office's third floor was criticised as "unsupportable",<sup>17</sup> leading to a proposal to construct a dedicated museum and library building across from the India Office, on King Charles Street.<sup>18</sup> By the early 1880s this proposal was abandoned,<sup>19</sup> and the Indian sculptures were divided between



the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum. The British Museum took on material considered “ancient”, such as the Buddhist sculptures from Amaravati and Sarnath, [Figures 5.8, 5.9, 5.10] while the South Kensington Museum acquired the sculptures that were considered “medieval” such as Hindu statues [Figures 5.5, 5.7] and material that represented the subcontinent’s arts and crafts traditions.<sup>20</sup> Research on the afterlife of the India Museum’s collections is a rich field of study. Arthur Macgregor has eloquently written about the scope and diversity of its fragmented collections, looking at not just Indian sculpture but also ethnographic objects, natural history specimens, and other miscellanea, highlighting the vast spectrum of its collections.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Tara Kuruvilla’s research focuses on the dispersal and afterlife of the India Museum’s collections up to the present day.<sup>22</sup>

The India Office building, built by George Gilbert Scott and Matthew Digby Wyatt, was completed in the summer of 1867.<sup>23</sup> Gilbert Scott designed its exterior, while the interiors were planned by Digby Wyatt, the same architect who designed the sculpture gallery inside East India House only a decade earlier. [Figure 5.4] The oil paintings and sculptures from East India House’s working areas were integrated into the India Office’s furnishings by Digby Wyatt, who designed several spaces to accommodate specific objects. For example, the marble relief of “Britannia Receiving Riches” [Figure 1.12] that was commissioned in 1728 for East India House’s Directors’ Court Room was reinstalled above the fireplace in the India Office Council Chamber. Digby Wyatt also constructed four niches at the top of the India Office’s ornate entrance staircase, at the building’s east corner, for the General Court Room’s statues of Charles Cornwallis, Eyre Coote, Richard Wellesley, and the Duke of Wellington. [Figures 3.7, 4.7, 6.6] The casual acceptance of these artworks as the India Office’s decor suited the British government, which showed “few expressions of sympathy or appreciation ... for the groundwork laid under more precarious circumstances by their mercantile forerunners”.<sup>24</sup>

On the building’s exterior, overlooking St James’s Park, George Gilbert Scott designed eight niches that held statues of the East India Company’s final eight governors general, beginning with William Bentinck (1774–1839) and ending with John Laird Lawrence (1811–1879). These eight men represented the East India Company’s establishment in Calcutta between 1833, when the Charter Act extinguished the Company’s remaining trade monopolies, and before its absorption into the British state. Instead of identifying who these men were by engraving their names below them, they were cryptically “identified by the armorial bearings carved on a marble slab above the head of each”.<sup>25</sup> This obtuse labelling system, which identifies the eight men not as individuals but as members of ruling class families, shows that they were perceived as natural rulers of Britain and its empire. The generations that would follow them were expected to prevail as leaders, with their family heraldry recognisable to future British citizens.

When East India House was demolished, it wasn’t just the art collections stored inside its headquarters that underwent a loss of meaning. The memorials commissioned for Westminster Abbey, St Paul’s Cathedral, and St George’s Bloomsbury, the only items to remain in their original locations, have only recently been reidentified as East India Company monuments.<sup>26</sup> The memorials to Charles Watson, [Figure 3.2] Stringer Lawrence, [Figure 4.3] Eyre Coote, [Figure 4.8] and Edward Cooke [Figure 6.1] in Westminster Abbey embedded the Company’s actions inside England’s national

church, where its kings and queens had been buried since 1245. The memorial to Sir William Jones in St Paul's Cathedral, [Figure 3.10] positioned directly below Christopher Wren's dome, [Figure 3.11] was one of the "First Four" memorials to be installed on the cathedral floor in the 1790s. As for the memorial to Charles Grant inside St George's Bloomsbury, [Figure 4.13] at the time of its installation, this church was an important hub for the Church of England's "civilising mission", providing a school, library, and kitchen to the local community. These memorials, once the East India Company became a distant memory, faded into their ornate surroundings.

Memories of the East India Company's history were muddled and rearranged within the broader narratives of Britain's imperial state. By the late nineteenth century, there was little public understanding of the East India Company's role in establishing Britain's colonial presence in India and the narratives exposed by the Company's art collections were integrated into general understandings of Britain's empire. In the words of Geoff Quilley, subsuming the Company's art collections "within a larger imperial culture and history allowed both collections and Company, as it were, to disappear; by being absorbed both physically and ideologically within the overall discourse of public national and imperial history".<sup>27</sup> Within three decades of East India House's demolition, the Company's collections were diffused across several locations in London and there was little sense of their connected origins.

### Empire and distance

In the late nineteenth century, Britain's public was overwhelmingly supportive of its government's colonial objectives. School children were taught about an empire that was many times bigger than the British Isles, and public exhibitions were hosted that normalised an image of "Greater Britain", a nation whose strength and wealth hinged upon its overseas colonies. For this imperial vision to successfully function, British men and women had to be sent to different corners of the empire.<sup>28</sup> It was important to accept this image of distant colonies and be comfortable with Asia and Africa being part of the nation. Acceptance of the empire's vastness was the theme of a speech made by George Nathaniel Curzon in 1906.

Do not be frightened by distance. Do not let them be dismayed by exile. In far-off lands, amidst alien peoples, in unfriendly solitudes, under burning suns, your sons, the offspring of your race, will still do good work, work that is good for themselves, good for the country that has sent them out, and good for the community in which they are placed.<sup>29</sup>

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Britain's overseas presence was portrayed as progressive, and the "Anglo-Saxon race" was described as the natural controller of a vast empire.<sup>30</sup> This race-based belief, presented as fact, was a systemic part of colonial ideology. The East India Company's history was subsumed into the racially determined ideology of the Raj.

One example of how Britain's empire literally absorbed the East India Company's narratives was "The Empire of India Exhibition" of 1895. It was curated by the late Victorian entertainment producer Imre Kiralfi and was hosted at the Earl's Court

Exhibition Grounds in West London. The grounds featured a 60,000-seat theatre, the largest in Europe at that time, where a grand show, titled “India: A Grand Historical Spectacle”, was performed. Produced by Kiralfi, it was “a colourful, magnificent and entertaining piece of commercial grandeur and imperial propaganda”<sup>31</sup> that purportedly educated the viewer on nearly a millennium of India’s history. Elsewhere on the exhibition grounds, there were roving magicians and jugglers, cows and camels, and a mock-up of a village where one could view Indian people engaged in different trades and occupations. Another area contained taxidermy Indian wildlife in “a varied series of tableaux”, including a man-eating tiger about to attack a British sportsman.<sup>32</sup> For aspiring hunters, there was a shooting area called the “Chitral Rifle Ranges”, where both “stationary and moving animals” could be fired upon.<sup>33</sup> To add to the funfair atmosphere, there was a 300-foot tall “Great Wheel” that could carry up to “1,600 persons at one revolution”.<sup>34</sup> Kiralfi’s work was undeniably geared towards entertaining the masses. To give another example of his work, one of his previous spectacles, titled “Nero; Or the Destruction of Rome”, had toured extensively with America’s P.T. Barnum and Bailey Circus.<sup>35</sup>

The 1895 Empire of India Exhibition included a display of objects about the East India Company that was curated by George Birdwood and William Foster, who, at that time, were both employees of the India Office. The 672 objects they brought together for the Empire of India Exhibition’s display of “Relics of the Honourable East India Company” were shown in the north end of the site’s Queen’s Palace Pavilion. About a tenth of these objects were from the India Office’s collections.<sup>36</sup> One would think that Birdwood and Foster might have arranged for some of the East India Company’s large oil paintings and sculptures to be included, but this was not the case. Of the objects listed in the catalogue, only the large wooden clock, [Figure 1.9] the plaster cast of the Company’s first coat of arms [Figure 1.5] and one of the red velvet chairs from the Directors’ Court Room made it into the “Relics” display.<sup>37</sup> Most of the items borrowed from the India Office were maps, plans, lithographs, and small objects such as stamps and weights. Birdwood and Foster probably didn’t have the gravitas to remove oil paintings and sculpture from the office areas where they were installed. Most of the objects in the “Relics” exhibition came from private collections, and were found by distributing a circular to “as many former servants of the East India Company as could be traced”.<sup>38</sup> George Birdwood also published a letter in *The Times* requesting that “those having any relics or memorials of the late Honourable East India Company, should address themselves to William Foster” if they wished them to be considered for exhibition at Earl’s Court.<sup>39</sup>

To preface the exhibition’s catalogue, William Foster published a short essay about the displays, titled “The Loan Collections of Relics and Memorials of the Honourable East India Company”.<sup>40</sup> In it, he expressed his desire

that something might usefully be done to remind the people of this country of a past in which India has been the theatre of some of the most magnificent exploits of the English race, and which has had an influence on the development of the nation not yet fully realized. It was, therefore, with great readiness that the directors [of the Empire of India Exhibition] listened to a suggestion to add to their programme an exhibition of relics and memorials of that great

and unique corporation which built up for England its Empire in the East – The Honourable East India Company.<sup>41</sup>

Foster's essay shows that the British public in 1895 didn't connect Britain's empire with the East India Company. Perhaps he hoped that the "relics" displayed inside the Queen's Palace Pavilion at Earl's Court would awaken public awareness of the East India Company's contribution to imperial Britain.

Unfortunately, Foster's and Birdwood's earnest efforts to educate the masses in 1895 couldn't compete with the general funfair excitement of Imre Kiralfi's exhibition. One London newspaper summed up this failure as follows.

To the student the exhibits will no doubt claim first attention, and in the inspection and examination of these many a pleasant hour could be spent. But the great majority of the British public will go here, as they go elsewhere, for amusement.<sup>42</sup>

Given the choice between camels, magicians, man-eating tigers, and a giant wheel, most visitors to the 1895 Empire of India Exhibition would have only paused to walk through the dry history of the East India Company on rainy days. The purpose of the 1895 exhibition was, after all, not to educate the masses on the Company's history, but to normalise Britain's precarious situation as the controller of a vast empire.

### The return of Robert Clive

The India Office, a building dedicated to the ideology of the Raj, was now the home for many of the East India Company's artworks. As has been shown in the preceding chapters, the paintings and sculpture that were commissioned by the East India Company rarely retained their original meanings for more than three decades. The meanings of objects were perpetually reinvented to fit with more recent objectives and historical interpretations. Numerous examples of these changes in meaning have already been examined in this book such as the landscapes of Francis Swain Ward. [Figures 2.1 to 2.10] When the East India Company acquired them in 1773, the Ward paintings, displayed inside a single room of East India House in matching frames, were celebrations of inland conquests. By the early nineteenth century this remarkable set of politically charged paintings had been divided, with half of them displayed inside the India Museum alongside an eclectic mix of unconnected objects. Making the museum look attractive had become more important than celebrating the Company's early victories in southern India. This amnesia over the original meaning of objects was also observed by William Foster in 1895, only 21 years after the East India Company was formally dissolved.<sup>43</sup>

It is impossible to fully describe the changes in meaning to East India Company artworks after their removal from East India House. In lieu of such an exercise, the treatment, positioning, and interpretation of the East India Company's three portraits of Robert Clive will be considered here. All three of them were moved from East India House to the India Office and are examples of how much, by the early twentieth century, perceptions of the Company had changed. The earliest of these is the statue



of Clive in Roman military dress by Peter Scheemakers. [Figure 3.3] Commissioned in 1760, it commemorated the Company's military conquests in Madras and Bengal in the 1750s. Inside East India House, it was displayed in one of the General Court Room's high niches, where it gazed down upon noisy auctions and shareholder meetings alongside the statues of other East India Company notables. When the statues in the General Court Room were moved into the India Office, Digby Wyatt selected four of them for display in niches above the India Office's ornate east staircase. The Clive statue was not one of them, and, instead, it was placed at the opposite side of the building, in a recess near the west staircase on the first floor, where it confronted passers-by at eye level.<sup>44</sup> A description of the statue dated 1907 describes it as "in a dark corridor of the India Office in London. But represented as he is in Roman costume with a sword and a shield with Medusa's head lying at his feet, this effigy of Clive cannot be considered very satisfactory".<sup>45</sup> It seems that Clive's Roman attire made him unpopular, and the statues on the India Office's entrance staircase were no longer associated with him. Did Digby Wyatt know that the Scheemakers statue spawned Clive's caustic nickname, "Nero Asiaticus", in 1771?<sup>46</sup>

The next portrait of Robert Clive, commissioned in 1772, showed the alleged moment when the East India Company's pension scheme was founded. [Figure 4.1] It originally decorated the interior of East India House's Military Fund Office, where retired employees and their families collected their pensions. Edward Penny, one of London's most famous artists in the 1770s, represented Clive in this painting as a philanthropic individual at a time when his image was damaged by scandals. The painting's display inside a semi-public part of East India House was most likely a ploy to improve Clive's reputation. By 1900, Edward Penny's painting of Clive was in the most private room of the India Office. It was displayed in the private office of Sir Arthur Godley, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India, and the highest ranking civil servant in the India Office. A picture of Godley was published in 1900, in *Windsor Magazine*. He is shown seated behind his desk with Edward Penny's painting of Clive behind him. The article's text doesn't mention the painting of Clive, but it is recognisable in the photograph because of its distinctive square frame decorated with 22 rosettes.<sup>47</sup> Sequestered inside Godley's office, it was probably the least accessible oil painting in the entire India Office.

The third portrait of Robert Clive, measuring four metres across and nearly three metres tall, is Benjamin West's fictional scene of Clive and Shah Alam signing the Treaty of Allahabad. [Figure 4.14] The action depicted in the painting is often cited as the moment when British rule in South Asia commenced. The historian James Mill, one of East India House's most famous employees, wrote that it signalled when the East India Company gained legal and financial control over India. The painting was originally commissioned by Robert Clive for display in Claremont, one of his many private estates. It was given to the East India Company by his son, Edward Clive, half a century after the event shown in the painting allegedly took place. Inside East India House, it was displayed in the Committee of Correspondence Room, where the Company's highest-ranking directors and secretarial staff, including James Mill, drafted important correspondence for transmission to India. In 1868, when it was moved into the India Office, it was placed inside the Finance Committee Room on the building's first floor.<sup>48</sup> The West painting's subject matter was useful in the late nineteenth and

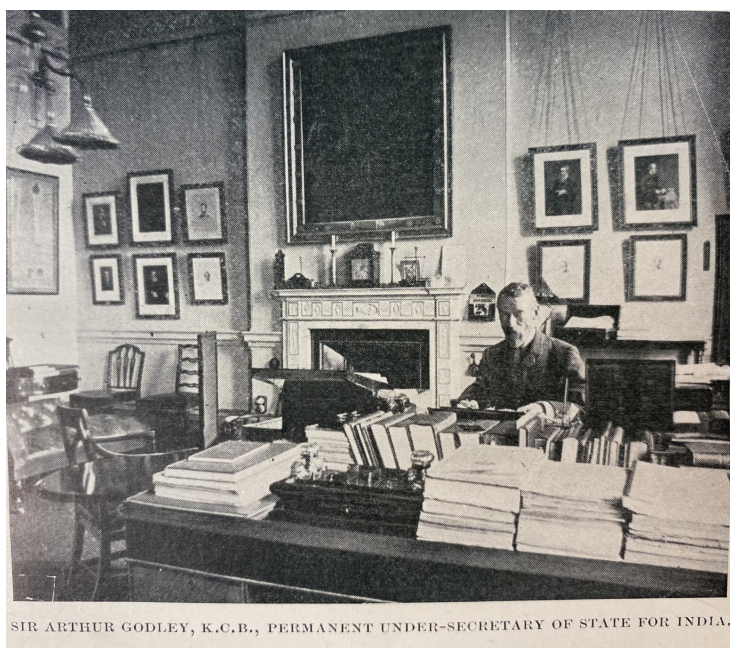


Figure 7.1. Sir Arthur Godley, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India, seated in his office with Edward Penny's painting of Robert Clive over the fireplace behind him. *Windsor Magazine*, October 1900. Photograph by the author.

early twentieth centuries because it visualised, in vague, populist terms, when Britain became politically dominant over India. To bring this image to the public, a rectangular bronze plaque based on it was cast, and along with two other plaques, was placed beside a larger composition, the bronze statue of Robert Clive by John Tweed.

John Tweed's statue of Robert Clive, along with three bronze plaques that decorated its plinth, was completed in 1912<sup>49</sup> and was funded by a scheme created by George Nathaniel Curzon called "The Lord Clive Memorial Fund". Curzon, the Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, was a great proponent of monuments and memorials. While serving as viceroy, he stepped up the efforts of the Archaeological Survey of India, reorganising it to prioritise the conservation and gentrification of monuments that were identified as historically important to India.<sup>50</sup> He was also responsible for erecting new monuments in and around Calcutta that commemorated pivotal ideological moments in India's colonial history such as the Battle of Plassey, the Black Hole incident, and Queen Victoria's accession as Empress of India.<sup>51</sup> On his return to Britain, Curzon continued to memorialise Britain's imperial history by rallying for monuments, funded by public subscription, to commemorate Robert Clive's legacy.<sup>52</sup>

The bronze Clive statue was one of several commissions paid for by the "Lord Clive Memorial Fund".<sup>53</sup> It was installed in 1916 on the specially planned Clive Steps, at the end of King Charles Street closest to St James's Park, next to the India Office building.<sup>54</sup> Just like the eight statues of the Company's final governors general that



*Figure 7.2.* Bronze statue of Robert Clive by John Tweed, 1912. English Heritage. Photograph by the author.





Figure 7.3. Bronze plaque by John Tweed of “Clive receiving the grant of Bengal Behar and Orissa at Allahabad August 1765”, 1912. English Heritage. Photograph by the author.

were placed on the side of the India Office building by George Gilbert Scott in the 1860s, the Clive statue looks out over St James’s Park. Unlike them, the Clive statue, erected half a century later, was intended to be recognised by a broad public audience as an educative tool. Instead of the cryptic labelling of family insignias above the eight statues on the side of the building, the Clive statue is plainly inscribed with the name “CLIVE” in capital letters that are nearly a foot tall. On the other three sides of the plinth, Tweed’s three bronze plaques narrate key moments from Robert Clive’s career in India. The plaque based on Benjamin West’s painting of Robert Clive and Shah Alam is on the side of the plinth that faces the India Office. The plaque titled “Clive in the mango tope on the eve of Plassey” is positioned at the back of the plinth, and visualises a scene described by George B Malleon in his Victorian book on Robert Clive.<sup>55</sup> The plaque on the plinth’s other side shows Robert Clive firing a cannon during the Battle of Arcot. It is based on a picture by Joseph Ratcliffe Skelton that was reproduced inside a popular children’s book titled *Our Empire Story*.<sup>56</sup> First published in 1908, the book relays stories about Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India, declaring that Britain’s “vast Empire is ours. It belongs to us, and we to it”.<sup>57</sup> In comic book fashion, the three plaques surrounding the Clive statue’s base narrated the most popular moments of his career to passers-by. One was a description from a Victorian biography of Clive, while another was from a story book that taught children about the centrality and permanence of Britain’s empire. The third plaque,



based on Benjamin West's iconic painting, faced the very building where, literally only a few metres away, the painting it is based on was displayed. Transposed into bronze, the three plaques show how Robert Clive's life and work was narrated to Britain's public over a hundred years ago, when the normalising of its overseas empire was a key component of state ideology. John Tweed's statue of Clive, which owed its existence to George Curzon, is an early-twentieth-century example of how Britain's white, elitist, imperial frontage absorbed the East India Company's image to create statements about Britain's greatness.

The muting of the East India Company's legacy in the early twentieth century is what makes it more fascinating to us today. The reality that Britain's empire in South Asia began as a mercantile company based in the City of London is a revelation to many, with best-selling books like William Dalrymple's *The Anarchy* exposing these commercial origins. In a post-colonial world, the narratives surrounding the East India Company's business practices feel strikingly familiar to us today, yet one of the key resources to understanding the Company's interpretations of its changing history, its corporately gathered art collections, has largely been overlooked. In the words of Nick Robins, "[t]he partial view of the Company in existing museums also needs to be addressed. Wonderful artefacts remain, but often lie mute in their glass display cabinets".<sup>58</sup> This book has hopefully shattered some of these glass cabinets to expose the narratives behind the Company's art collections.



Figure 7.4. Bronze plaque by John Tweed of “Clive in the mango tope on the eve of Plassey”, 1914. English Heritage. Photograph by the author.



Figure 7.5. Bronze plaque by John Tweed of “Clive at the Siege of Arcot September to November 1751”, 1914. English Heritage. Photograph by the author.



Figure 7.6. Illustration by Joseph R Skelton titled “Clive fired one of the guns himself” in *Our Empire Story* (1908). Photograph by the author.

The East India Company's vast archives in the British Library are the key to identifying these corporately gathered artworks. Once identified, the archives also help explain the significance of the artworks, and how their meanings changed. Despite the scattering of its collections a century and a half ago, most of the Company's paintings and sculptures have remained in London, with only a handful of objects moving beyond the capital. One such object is a sculpture from Amaravati that was sent to New Delhi's National Museum, and is still there today, making it the only Indian sculpture from the Company's collections to return to India.<sup>59</sup> Another artwork that left London is Benjamin West's large painting of Robert Clive and Shah Alam, [Figure 4.14] which in the early 1990s was placed on permanent loan to Powys Castle in Wales, the ancestral home of the Clive family which is now managed by the National Trust. By and large, however, the artworks that were moved out of East India House in 1860 are today in London's British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, British Library, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

By bringing together these corporately gathered collections into a single study, a vast visual archive emerges that reveals countless new ways to explore the East India Company's history. This book is a springboard for further contemplations on how corporately collected artworks can be analysed to support the work of post-colonial scholars. The paintings and sculptures described herein are primary sources that document the narratives the East India Company created and supported. The stories revealed by these artworks are interlaced with human stories of success, failure, defamation, and dominance that are useful to anyone seeking new perspectives on the history of empire. When regarded as documentation rather than illustration, artworks reveal exciting ways to understand history.

## Notes

- 1 Anonymous, "Her Majesty's East India House, 28 February 1841", in *The East India Magazine* (London: Vol 21, 1841), 219.
- 2 Margot Finn, "The Home Counties: Clusters and Connections", in *The East India Company at Home, 1757–1857*, ed. M. Finn and K. Smith (London: UCL Press, 2018), 172.
- 3 James Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1868), vol. 1, a2.
- 4 Ray Desmond, *The India Museum 1801–1879* (London: HMSO, 1982), 135.
- 5 William Foster, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Paintings, Statues &c in the India Office* (London: HMSO, 1924), ix.
- 6 Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World* (London: Pluto, 2006), 166; Anthony Webster, *The Twilight of the East India Company* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009) 147.
- 7 Chris Bayly, *The Raj. India and the British, 1600–1947* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1990), 240–241; Geoff Quilley, *British Art and the East India Company* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2020), 296–297.
- 8 *Delhi Gazette*, 29 September 1857. Quoted in Charles Ball, *The History of the Indian Mutiny* (London: The London Printing Company, 1859), vol. 2, 655.
- 9 *The familiar epistles of Mr. John Company to Mr. John Bull*. Reprinted from *Blackwood's Magazine*, January, February, and March 1858. Nabu Public Domain reprints.
- 10 *Blackwood's Magazine*, March 1858, 92.
- 11 *Blackwood's Magazine*, January 1858, 1.
- 12 *Blackwood's Magazine*, March 1858, 115.
- 13 *Illustrated London News*, 3 August 1861, 125–126.



- 14 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 123.
- 15 Plan of the India Office's third floor, 1867. BL, IOR/L/AG/9/8/3, f 227E.
- 16 William Foster's letters and lectures. BL, Mss Eur E242/3, f 603A.
- 17 *The Times*, 5 May 1874, 12; *The Times*, 15 May 1874, 10.
- 18 *The Times*, 14 January 1874, 10.
- 19 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 144.
- 20 Desmond, *The India Museum*, 170.
- 21 Arthur Macgregor, *Company Curiosities: Nature, Culture and the East India Company, 1600–1874* (London: Reaktion, 2018).
- 22 Tara Kuruvilla's upcoming PhD thesis (Columbia University) is provisionally titled "Disjecta Membra: The Dispersal and Afterlife of the India Museum".
- 23 Foster, *Descriptive Catalogue*, ix.
- 24 MacGregor, *Company Curiosities*, 285.
- 25 Foster, *Descriptive Catalogue*, xi.
- 26 Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda* (Montreal: McGill, 2006), 270–291.
- 27 Quilley, *British Art*, 313.
- 28 Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851–1939* (Manchester UP, 1988), 53.
- 29 R P Karkaria, *Lord Curzon's Farewell to India. Being Speeches Delivered as Viceroy & Governor-General of India During Sept–Nov 1905* (Mumbai: Thacker and Co, 1907), 63.
- 30 For Curzon's views on the "Anglo-Saxon race", see the conclusion of his speech at the Pilgrims' Dinner, London, April 6, 1906. In Karkaria, *Lord Curzon's Farewell to India*, 58–64.
- 31 Rosie Jensen, *Performing India on the Exhibition Stage 1851–1914* (PhD Thesis, University of Exeter, March 2018), 79.
- 32 Imre Kiralfi, *Official catalogue of the Empire of India Exhibition, Earls Court* (London: 1895). For descriptions of the wildlife displays see 375–376.
- 33 *Kilburn Times*, Fri 28 June 1895, 3.
- 34 *Kilburn Times*, Fri 28 June 1895, 3.
- 35 Advertisement for Barnum and Bailey's Circus, London, 11 November 1889. V&A, S.37-2018.
- 36 62 objects were loaned from the India Office. Kiralfi, *Official Catalogue*, 177–214.
- 37 The clock (BL, Foster 912) is listed as number 68, and the chair is number 452 in Kiralfi, *Official Catalogue*. The Coat of Arms (BL, Foster 859) is described in George Birdwood, *Relics of the Honourable East India Company* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1909), 55–56.
- 38 William Foster, "The Loan Collections of Relics and Memorials of the Honourable East India Company", in Kiralfi, *Official Catalogue*, 54.
- 39 *The Times*, February 5 1895, 11.
- 40 Foster, "The Loan Collections", 53–73.
- 41 Foster, "The Loan Collections", 53.
- 42 *Kilburn Times*, Fri 28 June 1895, 3.
- 43 Foster, "The Loan Collections", 53.
- 44 Foster, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 26.
- 45 Leaflet for the "Clive Memorial Fund". It quotes a letter from Curzon to the editor of *The Times*, April 1907. BL, Mss Eur F111/448A, 4.
- 46 Anonymous, "Memoirs of a Nabob", *Town & Country Magazine*, May 1771, 256. See Chapter 4 in this book.
- 47 Robert Machray, "The India Office (Photos by C. Pilkington)", *Windsor Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly for Men and Women*, October 1900, 483–492. Picture at page 489.
- 48 Foster, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 15.
- 49 Letter from John Tweed to George Curzon, 21 March 1912. BL, Mss Eur F/112/512.
- 50 The changes made to the ASI by Curzon are discernible in the British Library's photography archives. BL, Photo 1010, albums 1 to 19.
- 51 Thomas Metcalfe, "Monuments and Memorials: Lord Curzon's Creation of a Past for the Raj", in *Traces of India*, ed. Maria A Pelizzari (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 242–259.



#### CONTINUITIES

- 52 For Curzon's correspondence on the Clive Memorial Fund, see BL, Mss Eur F112/512.
- 53 Other Tweed statues funded by the Clive Memorial Fund included memorial plaques for Westminster Abbey and Merchant Taylors School, and a marble replica of Tweed's bronze statue for the Victoria Memorial Hall Kolkata.
- 54 There is a blueprint of the Clive Steps in the Curzon Papers. BL, Mss Eur F112/512.
- 55 George B Malleson, *Lord Clive* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1893), 95.
- 56 H E Marshall, *Our Empire Story: Stories of India and the Greater Colonies told to Boys and Girls* (London: T and E Jack, 1908), opposite 390.
- 57 Marshall, *Our Empire Story*, vii.
- 58 Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World* (London: Pluto, 2006), 189.
- 59 Robert Knox, *Amaravati: Buddhist sculpture from the Great Stupa* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 105, catalogue number 44; Jennifer Howes, "Colin Mackenzie and the Stupa at Amaravati", *South Asian Studies* 18 (2002): 63.

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